Introduction

Consistency and fairness in the interpretation and application of the Building Code is paramount in maintaining the confidence of the development/design/construction community in the efficiency and integrity of the permit process. Citizens who may only apply for one permit must also view the permit process as evenhanded and rational. It is essential to the continued acceptance of the permit process and the resulting safety of the citizens of Chicago that all plans and applications are judged by the same standards.

The following paragraphs are Department of Buildings clarifications and interpretations of certain sections of the Building Code. These sections have come to require further explanation in order to resolve confusion over when and how they are intended to be applied.

Please bear in mind that each project is unique, and may include elements that make the guidelines presented here inapplicable. Where specific cases require additional analysis of the Code, the Building Commissioner or his/her designee will provide the definitive interpretation. In such cases, and as a general rule, the Municipal Code is the primary authority, and in case of any inconsistency between the Code and these guidelines, the Code should be followed.

Richard Monocchio, Commissioner
Department of Buildings
# Chicago Building Code Clarifications and Interpretations

## INDEX

1. **Administrative**
   1.1 (13-32-310)(E) Changes in Contractors or Owners after a permit is issued
   1.2 (13-32-035) Assessing Stop Work Order (SWO) Fees

2. **Definitions**
   (Not used)

3. **Use and Occupancy**
   3.1 (13-64-020) Wood framing into masonry walls
   3.2 (13-64-090) Exterior stairway serving 2nd floor of single family residence
   3.3 (13-56-300) Health clubs & fitness centers policy
   3.4 (13-56-300) Occupancy content - Residential roof decks,
   3.5 (13-56-310) Occupancy content - Floor area per person
   3.6 (13-84-050)(c) Bathroom doors in school corridors
   3.7 (13-56-080) Assembly Occupancy - Classification & (13-56-090)
   3.8 (13-84-331) Automatic sprinkler system required in basement areas of night clubs or restaurant

4. **Special detailed requirements based on Use and Occupancy**
   4.1 (13-96-250) Private garage, one per Building
   4.2 (13-96-280) Access to a public-way from the rear exit for single family & (13-160-070) residences and multiple dwelling units
   4.3 (13-76-100)(4) Atriums
   4.4 (13-76-030) Combined detection and voice communication
   4.5 (13-96-260) Maximum height of private garages
   4.6 (4-95-052) Massage parlors - Requirement for separate bathrooms

5. **Building Heights and Areas**
   5.1 (13-116-020) Fire limits - Prohibited construction types
   5.2 (13-48-030) Parking garages in residential buildings
   5.3 (13-48-030) Retail occupancy in residential buildings
   5.3 (13-48-030) Retail occupancy in residential buildings

6. **Types of Construction**
   6.1 (13-60-100) Framing into walls
   6.2 (13-60-100) Type III-B construction - One-hour floor system
   6.3 (13-60-010) Mixed construction types
   6.4 (13-60-140) Fire protection for lintels
### 7. Fire Resistant Materials and Construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>(15-12-030)</td>
<td>Use of combustibles in Type III construction roof assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>(15-8-322)</td>
<td>Wood frame balconies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>(15-8-210)</td>
<td>Combustible material used to enclose heating equipment &amp; (15-8-220) rooms in Types III &amp; IV construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>(15-8-520)</td>
<td>Skylights and sloped glazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>(15-8-110)</td>
<td>Protection of openings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>(15-12-160)</td>
<td>Size of fire rated windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>(15-8-110)</td>
<td>Fire rated windows and the Energy Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>(15-8-160)</td>
<td>Enclosure of pipe shafts and ducts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>(15-8-200)</td>
<td>Enclosure of heating plants &amp; boilers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>(15-8-180)</td>
<td>Stairwell enclosure - Nonessential openings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>(15-8-140)</td>
<td>Convenient stairway enclosures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>(15-8-140)(b)</td>
<td>Convenient stairways - No enclosure required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>(15-8-323)</td>
<td>Weather protected entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>(15-8-320)</td>
<td>Clarifications concerning combustible porch materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>(15-8-322)</td>
<td>Clarification of the definition of ‘balcony’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>(15-8-150)</td>
<td>Clarification of elevator enclosures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>(15-8-010)</td>
<td>See 3.1 for additional information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. Interior Finishes

(Not used)

### 9. Fire Protection Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>(15-16-1280)</td>
<td>Visual and audible fire alarm devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>(18-27-760)</td>
<td>Remote power supply control unit -- Fire alarm system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>(15-16-350)</td>
<td>Buildings equipped with automatic sprinkler system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 10. Means of Egress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>(13-160-120)</td>
<td>Definition of travel distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>(13-160-150)</td>
<td>Maximum travel distance - Permitted increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>(13-160-090)</td>
<td>Direction in line of travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>(13-160-250)</td>
<td>Power-operated sliding doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>(13-160-250)</td>
<td>Sliding exit doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>(13-160-269)</td>
<td>Electro-magnetic locks on egress doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>(13-160-050)</td>
<td>Residential duplex units - exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>(13-160-050)</td>
<td>Basement level - One exit (part I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>(13-160-050)</td>
<td>Basement level - One exit (part II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>(13-160-050)</td>
<td>Roof Deck - Exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>(13-160-040)(d) &amp; (13-160-330)(a)(4)</td>
<td>Stairway serving the roof deck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.12</td>
<td>(13-160-310)(b)</td>
<td>Stairway landings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>(13-160-000)</td>
<td>Exits in existing buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>(13-160-050)(c)</td>
<td>Minimum number of exits from the 2nd floor of a single-family residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>(13-160-100)</td>
<td>Continuous means of exit – Stairs from a dwelling unit connecting to a common exit stair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.16</td>
<td>(13-160-070)</td>
<td>Exits through storage areas in Mercantile buildings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Accessibility
(Not used)

12. Interior Environment
12.1 (13-172) Natural light and ventilation (part I)
12.2 (13-172) Natural light and ventilation (part II)

13. Energy Conservation
(Not used)

14. Exterior Walls
(Not used)

15. Roof Assemblies and Rooftop Structures
(Not used)

16. Structural Loads
16.1 Replacement of roof decks Installed before 10/1/2003

17. Special Inspections and Tests
(Not used)

18. Foundations and Retaining Walls
(Not used)

19. Concrete
(Not used)

20. Aluminum
(Not used)

21. Masonry
(Not used)

22. Steel
(Not used)

23. Wood
(Not used)

24. Glazing
(Not used)

25. Gypsum Board and Plaster
(Not used)
26. Plastic
   (Not used)

27. Electrical
   (Not used)

28. Mechanical and Refrigeration
   (Not used)

29. Plumbing
   29.1 (11-18-010) Stormwater management
       & (18-29-1101.2.1)
       & (18-29-1101.2.3)
   29.2 (18-29-403.6) Location and availability of customer toilet facilities

30. Elevators and Other Conveying Systems
   (Not used)

31. Special Construction
   (Not used)

32. Encroachments into the Public Right-of-Way
   (Not used)

33. Safeguards During Construction
    33.1 (13-124-320) Stair railings and guardrails

34. Repair, Alterations, and Occupancy Changes
    34.1 (13-200-330) Exit requirements - Assembly and Institutional occupancies
    34.2 (13-200-200) Change of occupancy
    34.3 (13-200-380) Light and ventilation requirements - Existing buildings
    34.4 (13-200-260) Replacement of existing porches and decks
    34.5 (13-196-205) Materials and installation standards for retrofit fire
        & (13-196-207) protection systems

35. Maintenance of Existing Buildings
    (Not used)

36. Referenced Standards
    (Not used)

END