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Significant Changes to the 5th Edition Florida Building Codes

The effective date of the 5th Edition of the Florida Building Code is June 30, 2015. Many of the code changes were driven by changes to the base code, or driven by state statute and federal law. As a member service, I would like to point out some of the most significant revisions to the code that appear to have the greatest impact on FHBA members.

Building Volume:

§708.1 General (fire partitions):

The requirement that walls separating individual tenant spaces be separated by a fire partition has been deleted. Associated exceptions have also been deleted.

§907.2.9.3 Group R-2 College and University Buildings:

New section requiring a smoke detection system tied into the occupant notification system in the specified public and common spaces of R-2 college and university buildings. The required smoke alarms within individual dwelling and sleeping units are required to be interconnected with the building's fire alarm and detection system.

§1005.1 through 1005.6 Means of Egress Sizing:

Provisions for means of egress width have been editorially reorganized for clarity. New exception added for stairways for all groups other than Group H and I-2. Permits the use of a stairway means of egress factor of 0.2 in buildings with a sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 or 903.3.1.2 and an emergency voice/alarm communication system in accordance with Section 907.5.2.2.

§1011.2 Floor-Level Exit Signs In Group R-1:

New section requiring low-level exit signs complying with Section 1011.5 in Group R-1 occupancies where exit signs are required by Section 1011. The bottom of the sign is required to be between 10 and

12 inches of the floor, and is required to be flush-mounted to the door or wall.

§1013.8 Window Sills:

Revised to increase the minimum sill height at which a guard is not required from 24 inches to 36 inches. New exception limits the use of window fall protection devices complying with ASTM F 2006 to operable windows where the sill portion of the opening is located more than 75 feet above finished grade or the surface below. Window opening control devices complying with ASTM F 2090 are covered in new Section 1013.8.1.

Residential Volume:

§R302.1 Exterior Walls:

Section revised to specify exterior wall minimum fire-resistance ratings based on whether the building is sprinklered in accordance with Section P2904. To use the minimum fire-resistance ratings based on fire separation distance permitted by the 2010 FBCR, the building would have to be sprinklered in accordance with Section P2904. New table requires greater fire separation distances for the same fire resistance ratings in buildings not equipped with an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section P2904. Exception for buildings located on zero lot lines has been deleted.

§R302.5.1 Opening Protection (between the garage and the residence).

Revised to require doors between the garage and residence to be equipped with self-closing devices.

§R311.3 Floors and Landings at Exterior Doors:

Exception permitting the landing to be omitted for doors with a stairway of two or fewer risers on the exterior side of the door has been deleted. New exception permits the landing to be less than 36 inches in the direction of travel for exterior balconies less than 60 square feet and only accessible from a door. Landing slope is now limited to 2 percent.

§R314.5 Interconnection:

New section pertaining to interconnection of smoke alarms relocated from Section R314.3 and R314.4. Exception has been revised to remove the physical interconnection requirement of all alarms where listed wireless alarms are installed and all alarms sound upon activation.

§R501.3 Fire Protection of Floors:

New section requiring floors to be covered with minimum ½ inch gypsum board or 5/8 inch wood structural panel on the underside. Exceptions provided for sprinklers and certain crawl spaces.

§R806.1 Ventilation Required:

Language added requiring ventilation openings to open directly to the outside air. Exception permitting unvented attics designed to eliminate the venting has been deleted. New exception permits the omission of venting when determined not necessary by the code official due to atmospheric or climatic conditions.

§R905.2.7 Underlayment Application:

Underlayment requirements have been significantly revised. For roof slopes of 2:12 to less than 4:12, a two layer system is required. For roof slopes of 4:12 and greater, a single layer is permitted but underlayment is required to be ASTM D 226 Type II, ASTM D 4869 Type IV, or ASTM D 6757 (all are equivalent to a 30 lb. underlayment). Required fastening of underlayment to roof has been significantly enhanced. Self-adhered underlayment complying with ASTM D 1970 is also permitted.

Energy Conservation Volume, Residential Provisions:

§Table R402.1.1 Insulation and Fenestration Requirements by Component:

Most of the Florida-specific amendments to this table have been deleted and replaced with the requirements of the base code. A new note has been added for impact rated fenestration limiting the maximum U-factor to 0.75 in Climate Zone 1 and 0.65 in Climate Zone 2.

§R402.2.1 Ceilings With Attic Spaces:

New section permitting the use of R-30 when R-38 is required where the full height of uncompressed R-30 insulation extends over the wall top plate at eaves. Similar reduction is permitted when R-49 is required.

§R402.4.1.2 Testing (Blower Door):

This section is now mandatory. Air changes per hour must not exceed five in Climate Zones 1 and 2, and must not exceed three in all others. The conditions of testing have undergone slight modification but are essentially the same except that the condition that HVAC ducts not be sealed has been removed.

§R405.7.6 Installation Criteria for Homes Using the Ceiling Fan Option:

New section permitting a 2% reduction in cooling energy use for the proposed design when one or more ceiling fans are installed in each of the bedrooms and a minimum of one installed in all primary living areas. Specific ceiling fan criteria are also providing. New Table R406.7.6 specifies minimum fan sizes.

The changes to the 5th Edition Florida Codes will present challenges in many areas. Together, we can meet these challenges and continue to provide affordable, energy efficient, and code compliant buildings and structures throughout the state.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the 5th Edition Florida Codes.

In Building Safety,

John Farinelli

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