



Residential Code Essentials

Based on the 2015 International Residential Code®

International Code Council
Stephen A. Van Note

**Residential Code Essentials:
Based on the 2015 International
Residential Code®**

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ISBN: 978-1-60983-345-9

Cover Design: Lisa Triska

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First Printing: March 2015

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



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Preface

Construction of residential buildings routinely consists of conventional practices, those tried-and-true methods that have performed well over the years and have long been recognized by the building code. With the introduction of new technology, materials, and methods, improved understanding of safe and healthy living environments, and innovation in dwelling designs, residential construction and the codes that regulate it have become increasingly complex. Such complexity is necessary to afford flexibility in design and construction. Reference publications intending to explain the provisions regulating residential construction may overwhelm the reader with a broad range of topics and alternatives, may provide superficial coverage of all requirements, or may focus on the details of a limited number of provisions.

Residential Code Essentials: Based on the 2015 International Residential Code® was developed to address the need for an illustrated text explaining the basics of the residential code—those provisions essential to understanding the application of the code to the most commonly encountered building practices. The text is presented and organized in a user-friendly manner with an emphasis on technical accuracy and clear non-code language. The content is directed to readers with a basic understanding of conventional dwelling construction but a less than complete knowledge of the *International Residential Code®* (IRC).

Anyone involved in the design, construction, or inspection of residential buildings will benefit from this book. Beginning and experienced inspectors, contractors, home builders, architects, designers, home inspectors and students of construction technology or related fields will gain a fundamental understanding and practical application of the frequently used provisions of the 2015 edition of the IRC.

The content of *Residential Code Essentials* is organized to correspond to the order of construction, beginning with sitework and foundations through completion of a safe, healthy and energy-efficient dwelling. Mechanical, fuel-gas, plumbing and electrical provisions are placed in separate chapters. The advantage of this format to the reader is that it pulls related information together from various sections of the IRC into one convenient location of the text and provides a familiar frame of reference to those with construction experience. The book explains the difference between “prescriptive” and “performance” requirements. Prescriptive structural design requirements to resist the forces of wind, earthquake and snow are described and illustrated in an easy-to-understand way. Structural topics include conventional footings and foundations (including the fundamentals of soil capacity), conventional wood floor, wall and roof framing, engineered wood products and seismic reinforcing of masonry chimneys. Fire- and life-safety concerns are addressed with topics including means of egress, emergency escape, stairways, fall protection, smoke alarms, fire sprinklers and fire-resistant construction. *Residential Code Essentials* also covers the minimum

interior environmental conditions for a healthy living environment, weather protection and energy conservation measures.

Correct and reasonable application of the code provisions is enhanced by a basic understanding of the code development process, the scope, intent and correlation of the family of International Codes, and the proper administration of those codes. Such fundamental information is provided in the opening chapters of this publication. The book also explains the interaction of a building code with other local and state regulations and includes discussion of common hazards of the built environment that may be regulated by state or federal agencies.

This book does not intend to cover all provisions of the IRC or all of the accepted materials and methods of construction of residential buildings. Focusing in some detail on the most common conventional construction provisions affords an opportunity to fully understand the basics without exploring every variable and alternative. This is not to say that information not covered is any less important or valid. This book is best used as a companion to the IRC, which should be referenced for more complete information.

Residential Code Essentials features full-color illustrations to assist the reader in visualizing the application of the code requirements. Practical examples, simplified tables and highlights of particularly useful information also aid in understanding the provisions and determining code compliance. References to the applicable sections of the 2015 edition of the IRC are helpful in locating the corresponding code language and related topics in the code. A glossary of code and construction terms clarifies the meaning of the technical provisions.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE

The IRC is a comprehensive, stand-alone residential code that establishes minimum regulations for the construction of one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses up to three stories in height, including provisions for fire and life safety, structural design, energy conservation and mechanical, fuel-gas, plumbing and electrical systems. The IRC incorporates prescriptive provisions for conventional construction as well as performance criteria that allow the use of new materials and new building designs.

The IRC is one of the codes in the family of International Codes published by the International Code Council (ICC). All are maintained and updated through an open code development process and are available internationally for adoption by the governing authority to provide consistent enforceable regulations for the built environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful appreciation is due to Sandra Hyde, P.E., Senior Staff Engineer for ICC Product Development for her thorough review and valued comments in developing the 2015 edition of *Residential Code Essentials*. Previous editions (as part of the Building Code Basics series) were also the result of a collaborative effort. In addition to Sandra Hyde, valuable contributions were made by the following: Hamid Naderi, PE, Senior Vice President, ICC Business and Product Development, who developed the original concept and was instrumental in launching the series; Doug Thornburg, AIA, ICC Vice President Education and Certification, who provided expert direction and advice, as well as oversight in maintaining consistency throughout the series; John Henry, PE, former ICC Principal Staff Engineer, who offered his generous assistance and patient explanations relating to the structural provisions; and former ICC staff member Scott Stookey, who provided welcome expertise on fire resistance and fire protection systems. All contributed to the accuracy and quality of the finished product.

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL

The International Code Council is a member-focused association. It is dedicated to developing model codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes. ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) is the industry leader in performing technical evaluations for code compliance fostering safe and sustainable design and construction.

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