PREFACE

Introduction

The *Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code* (USBC) is a state regulation promulgated by the Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development, a Governor-appointed board, for the purpose of establishing minimum regulations to govern the construction and maintenance of buildings and structures.

The provisions of the USBC are based on nationally recognized model building and fire codes published by the International Code Council, Inc. (ICC). The model codes are made part of the USBC through a regulatory process known as incorporation by reference. The USBC also contains administrative provisions governing the use of the model codes and establishing requirements for the enforcement of the code by the local building departments and other code enforcement agencies.

In keeping with the designations of the USBC used previously, since the 2021 editions of the International Codes are incorporated by reference into this version of the USBC, it is known as the 2021 edition of the USBC.

Arrangement

The USBC is part of the *Virginia Administrative Code* (VAC), the official compilation of state regulations published under the authority and guidance of the Virginia Code Commission. Due to the difference in the section numbering system between the VAC and the model codes incorporated by reference into the USBC, the USBC utilizes a dual section numbering system. In the USBC, the VAC section numbers are listed first, followed by a section number matching the model code system. In this printing of the USBC, the VAC section numbers are omitted and only the model code numbering system is utilized. The version of the USBC containing both the VAC section numbers and the model code numbering can be accessed through Virginia’s Legislative Information System (LIS) here: https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title13/agency5/

Overview

The USBC is divided into three stand-alone parts. Part I contains regulations specific to the construction of new buildings and structures and is known as the *Virginia Construction Code*. Part II contains regulations specific to the rehabilitation of existing buildings, including repair, alterations, additions and change of occupancy in existing buildings and structures, and is known as the *Virginia Existing Building Code*. Part III of the USBC contains the regulations for the maintenance of existing structures which is enforced at the option of the local governments. It is known as the *Virginia Maintenance Code*.

Codes Purchased from ICC

The 2021 edition of the USBC is being made available in pamphlet form as in past editions of the USBC. In addition to the pamphlet form of the USBC published by DHCD, the International Code Council (ICC) publishes versions of the *Virginia Construction Code*, *Virginia Existing Building Code*, *Virginia Maintenance Code* and a series of Virginia specific trade codes.
Marginal Markings

In the ICC published versions, marginal markings are provided to distinguish between text which is part of the International Codes and text which is part of the state regulations. Double vertical lines in the margins within the body of the codes indicate state amendments to the International Codes. As in the standard printings of the International Codes, a single vertical line in the margins within the body of the code indicates a technical change from the previous edition of the International Codes. Deletions from the previous editions of the International Codes are indicated in the form of an arrow (→) in the margin where an entire section, paragraph, exception or table has been deleted or an item in a list of items or a table has been deleted. Deletions to the Virginia Code are indicated with an open caret (> in the margin.

Technical Assistance

The local building departments and enforcing agencies may be contacted for further information concerning the USBC. Contact information for the State Building Codes Office is below.

DHCD, Division of Building and Fire Regulation  
State Building Codes Office  
600 East Main Street, Suite 300  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Phone: (804) 371-7150 – Email: sbco@dhcd.virginia.gov  
Website: www.dhcd.virginia.gov/codes
PREVIOUS ADOPTIONS and AMENDMENTS
of the USBC and SFPC

The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) was first adopted in 1973 by the State Board of Housing. Responsibility for the USBC passed to the State Board of Housing and Community Development on July 1, 1978. The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code was first adopted by the Board of Housing and Community Development on March 1, 1988. The initial adoption and subsequent amendments by these Boards are indicated below:

1973 Edition
Effective date: September 1, 1973
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, Administrative Amendments, 1973 Edition
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1971
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1970, with 1972 Accumulative Supplement
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1971
NFPA National Electrical Code/1971

1974 Accumulative Supplement
Effective date: April 1, 1974
Title: 1974 Accumulative Supplement to Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1971
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1970, with 1972 Accumulative Supplement
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1971
NFPA National Electrical Code/1971

1975 Accumulative Supplement
Effective date: February 7, 1976
Title: 1975 Accumulative Supplement to Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Building Code/1975
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1975
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1975
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1975
NFPA National Electrical Code/1975

1978 Accumulative Supplement (First Amendment)
Effective date: January 1, 1981
NOTE: The 1978 Accumulative Supplement to the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code was continued, but with a few changes to the previously referenced BOCA Basic Building Code/1978.

1981 Edition
Effective date: July 16, 1982
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, 1981 Edition
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Building Code/1981
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1981
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1981
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1979 with 1980 Amendments
NFPA National Electrical Code/1981

1981 Edition (First Amendment)
Effective date: June 20, 1984
Title: Sections 515.4 and 515.5 of Article 5 of the 1981 Edition, Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code

1984 Edition
Effective date: April 1, 1986
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, Volume I—New Construction Code, 1984 Edition
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Building Code/1984
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1984
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1984
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1983 with 1984 Amendments
NFPA National Electrical Code/1984

1987 Edition
Effective date: March 1, 1988
Major reference standards:
BOCA Basic Building Code/1987
BOCA Basic Mechanical Code/1987
BOCA Basic Plumbing Code/1987
CABO One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code/1986 with 1987 Amendments
NFPA National Electrical Code/1987
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 1987 Edition
Major reference standard:
2003 Edition
Effective date: November 16, 2005
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2003 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- International Code Council (ICC)
- ICC International Building Code 2003
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2003
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2003
- ICC International Residential Code 2003
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2005
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2003 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2003

2006 Edition
Effective date: May 1, 2008
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2006 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2006
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2006
- ICC International Residential Code 2006
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2005
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2006 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2006

2009 Edition
Effective Date: March 1, 2011
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2009 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- ICC International Building Code 2009
- ICC International Fuel Gas Code 2009
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2009
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2009
- ICC International Residential Code 2009
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2008
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2009 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2009

2012 Edition
Effective Date: July 14, 2014
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2012 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- ICC International Building Code 2012
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2012
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2012
- ICC International Residential Code 2012
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2011
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2012 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2012

2015 Edition
Effective Date: September 4, 2018
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2015 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- ICC International Building Code 2015
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2015
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2015
- ICC International Residential Code 2015
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2014
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2015 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2015

2018 Edition
Effective Date: July 1, 2021
Title: Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
(2018 Edition)
Major referenced standards:
- ICC International Building Code 2018
- ICC International Energy Conservation Code 2018
- ICC International Fuel Gas Code 2018
- ICC International Mechanical Code 2018
- ICC International Plumbing Code 2018
- ICC International Residential Code 2018
- NFPA National Electrical Code 2017
Title: Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2018 Edition
Major reference standard:
- ICC International Fire Code 2018
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER 1  ADMINISTRATION  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-1**
- Section 101 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-1
- 102 Purpose and Scope . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-1
- 103 Application of Code . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-2
- 104 Enforcement, Generally . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-4
- 105 Violations . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-6
- 106 Unsafe Structures . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-7
- 107 Appeals . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1-7

**CHAPTER 2  DEFINITIONS  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2-1**
- Section 201 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2-1
- 202 General Definitions . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2-1

**CHAPTER 3  GENERAL REQUIREMENTS . . . . . 3-1**
- Section 301 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-1
- 302 Exterior Property Areas . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-1
- 303 Swimming Pools, Spas and Hot Tubs . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-1
- 304 Exterior Structure . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-1
- 305 Interior Structure . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-2
- 306 Component Serviceability (Section deleted) . . . . . . . . . 3-2
- 307 Handrails and Guardrails . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-2
- 308 Rubbish and Garbage . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-3
- 309 Pest Infestation and Extermination . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-3
- 310 Lead-Based Paint . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 3-3
- 311 Aboveground Liquid Fertilizer Storage Tanks (ALFSTs) . . . 3-3

**CHAPTER 4  LIGHT, VENTILATION AND OCCUPANCY LIMITATIONS . . . 4-1**
- Section 401 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4-1
- 402 Light . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4-1
- 403 Ventilation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4-1
- 404 Occupancy Limitations . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4-1

**CHAPTER 5  PLUMBING REQUIREMENTS . . . . . 5-1**
- Section 501 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-1
- 502 Required Facilities (Section deleted) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-1
- 503 Toilet Rooms (Section deleted) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-1
- 504 Plumbing Systems and Fixtures . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-1
- 505 Water System . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-1
- 506 Sanitary Drainage System . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-2
- 507 Storm Drainage . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 5-2

**CHAPTER 6  MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS . . . . . 6-1**
- Section 601 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-1
- 602 Heating and Cooling Facilities . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-1
- 603 Mechanical Equipment . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-1
- 604 Electrical Facilities . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-2
- 605 Electrical Equipment . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-2
- 606 Elevators, Escalators and Dumbwaiters . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-2
- 607 Duct Systems . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6-3

**CHAPTER 7  FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS . . . . . 7-1**
- Section 701 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-1
- 702 Means of Egress . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-1
- 703 Fire-Resistance Ratings . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-1
- 704 Fire Protection Systems . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-2
- 705 Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Detection . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-2

**CHAPTER 8  REFERENCED STANDARDS . . . . . . . . . . . . 8-1**

**APPENDIX A  BOARDING STANDARD**
- Section A101 General . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . APPENDIX A-1
- A102 Materials . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . APPENDIX A-1
- A103 Installation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . APPENDIX A-1
- A104 Referenced Standard . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . APPENDIX A-1

**APPENDIX B  BOARDING OF APPEALS (DELETED)**
- Section APPENDIX B-1

**INDEX**
- INDEX-1