Jamaican Standard

2024 Jamaica Existing Building Code

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PREFACE

Introduction

The 2024 *Jamaica Existing Building Code* (JEBC) is an amalgamation of locally acceptable requirements from the 2018 *International Existing Building Code* (IEBC), the relevant provisions from the 2009 and 2015 Jamaica Application Documents, and the 2018 Jamaica Building Act (Law) and its regulations. The JEBC establishes minimum requirements for existing buildings using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles intended to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings while requiring reasonable upgrades and improvements[1]. The Bureau of Standards established by Section 3 of the Standards Act is empowered under Section 15 of the Building Act, to prescribe what constitutes the Jamaica National Building Codes, and determine the extent to which the International Codes (I-Codes) shall apply to Jamaica. Where the Bureau of Standards determines that the I-Codes apply, Section 16 of the Building Act empowers the Bureau of Standards to adopt or adapt the I-Code provisions in the National Building Codes.

The I-Codes, and their Jamaican counterparts, including this *Jamaica Existing Building Code*, are being used in a variety of ways in both the public and private sectors. Most industry professionals are familiar with the I-Codes as the basis of legislation in Jamaica. However, the impact of the codes extends well beyond the regulatory arena, as they are used in a variety of nonregulatory settings, including:

- Voluntary compliance programmes such as those promoting sustainability, energy efficiency and disaster resistance.
- The insurance industry, to estimate and manage risk, and as a tool in underwriting and rate decisions.
- Certification and credentialing of individuals involved in the fields of building design, construction and safety.
- Certification of building and construction-related products.
- Jamaica Government agencies, to guide construction in an array of government-owned properties.
- Facilities management.
- “Best practices” benchmarks for designers and builders.
- College, university and professional school textbooks and curricula.
- Reference works related to building design and construction.

In addition to the codes themselves, the code development process brings together building professionals on a regular basis. It provides an international forum for discussion and deliberation about building design, construction methods, safety, performance requirements, technological advances and innovative products.

[1.] This 2024 edition is fully compatible with the Jamaica National Building Codes (JNBC), locally modified from the I-Codes and published by the International Code Council (ICC). The JNBC includes the *Jamaica Building Code*, *Jamaica Energy Conservation Code*, *Jamaica Fire Code*, *Jamaica Fuel Gas Code*, *Jamaica Mechanical Code*, *Jamaica Plumbing Code*, *Jamaica Private Sewage Disposal Code*, *Jamaica Property Maintenance Code*, *Jamaica Small Building/Residential Code* and the *Jamaica Electrical Code*.

Development

This 2024 edition of the *Jamaica Existing Building Code* presents the code as originally issued in 2009 with changes reflected in the unpublished 2015 editions and further changes approved by the ICC Code Development Process in its 2018 edition.

This code is founded on principles intended to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings that adequately protect public health, safety and welfare; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; provisions that do not restrict the use of new materials, products or methods of construction; and provisions that do not give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, products or methods of construction.

Maintenance

The *Jamaica Existing Building Code* is kept up-to-date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code consultants to a BSJ Code Review Committee comprising enforcement officials, industry representatives, design professionals, academia and other interested parties. Proposed changes are carefully considered through an open code development process in which all interested and affected parties may participate.

The BSJ and ICC Code Development Process reflects principles of openness, transparency, balance, due process and consensus—the principles embodied in a local standards development policy and OMB Circular A-119 respectively. The BSJ and ICC standards development process is open to anyone; there is no cost to participate, and people can participate without travel cost through the BSJ public comment period and the ICC's cloud-based app, cdpAccess®. A broad cross section of interests are represented in the BSJ and ICC Code Development Process. The codes, which are updated periodically, include safeguards that allow for accelerated action when required for urgent health and safety reasons.

In order to ensure that organizations with a direct and material interest in the codes have a voice in the process, the BSJ has developed partnerships with key industry segments that will be impacted by the use of the codes. Some code development committee members were nominated by the following industry partners and approved by the BSJ Council:

- Jamaica Institution of Engineers (JIE)
- Jamaica Institution of Architects (JIA)
- Construction Industry Council (CIC)

The Code Development Committee evaluates and makes recommendations regarding proposed changes to the codes both from its expertise and from suggestions advanced by BSJ-appointed consultants. Their recommendations are then subject to public comment and alterations emanating therefrom, ICC's review, clarification and formatting of the proposed draft code and acceptance by the BSJ's Standards Council (Board of Directors).

The contents of this work are subject to change through the code development cycles and by any governmental entity that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Standards Division of the Bureau of Standards Jamaica.

While the I-Code development procedure is thorough and comprehensive, the BSJ, ICC, its members and those participating in the development of the codes disclaim any liability resulting from the publication or use of the I-Codes, or from compliance or noncompliance with their provisions. The BSJ does not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code.

Code Development Committee Responsibilities

In each code development cycle, consultants' proposed changes to this code are considered at the BSJ's Building Code Technical Review Committee (BCTRC) meetings and its approved alterations constitute the recommendation to the Jamaican public for the final proposed change. Code changes as warranted may arise from the public comment exercise before the draft code is submitted to the

ICC for its review, suggested clarifications and formatting. The draft document is then finally presented to the BSJ's Standards Council where reasons for significant section changes are provided and acceptance of the draft as a national code sought. Any significant condition for approval is factored into the draft code by the BSJ's Building Code Committee before it is sent to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to be declared and gazzetted as a national Jamaican code.

In establishing the BCTRC, the Standards Act requires that the broadest stakeholder's representation be built into this committee. The committee has been made large to facilitate the diverse codes and subject matter to be reviewed, ensure that meetings have the best chance of a quorum whenever they are called, and the mandatory virtual meetings which the Covid Pandemic has imposed. The following are the persons who served on the BCTRC and the organization they represented:

1. Mr. Roosevelt DaCosta—Chief Code Consultant, Endacosta Limited
2. Mrs. Lise Walter—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
3. Mr. Peter Jervis—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
4. Mr. Percival Stewart—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
5. Dr. Marva Blankson—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
6. Mr. Oneil Josephs— Jamaica Institution of Engineers
7. Mr. Alex Bernard—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
8. Mr. Kevin Sinclair— Jamaica Institution of Engineers
9. Mr. Noel Whyte—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
10. Mr. Gary Walters—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
11. Mr. Dwight Ricketts—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
12. Mr. Howard Chin—Jamaica Institution of Engineers
13. Mr. Karl Kaiser—Private Fire Consultant, Kaiser Fire Prevention
14. Mrs. Nilsia Johnson—Ministry of Health & Wellness, Environmental Health Unit
15. Mrs. Winsome Grant—Jamaica Fire Brigade
16. Mr. Sirnal Sangster—Jamaica Fire Brigade
17. Mr. Derval McKenzie—Jamaica Fire Brigade
18. Mr. Alfred Fennel—Jamaica Fire Brigade
19. Mr. Dwight Wilson—Ministry of Local Government & Community Development
20. Mr. Carl Drummond—Ministry of Local Government & Community Development
21. Mr. Shane Slater—Bureau of Standards Jamaica
22. Mr. Eldon Livingston—Bureau of Standards Jamaica
23. Mr. Wilfred Francis—Bureau of Standards Jamaica
24. Mr. Romaine McLean—Bureau of Standards Jamaica
25. Mr. Richard Lawrence—Bureau of Standards Jamaica
26. Mr. Sheldon Grant—Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
27. Mr. David Allen—Code Consultant, Endacosta Limited
28. Mr. Noel DaCosta—Code Consultant, Endacosta Limited
29. Mrs. Erica Whondell Monroe—Legal Consultant, Endacosta Limited
30. Mr. David Chung—Code Consultant, Endacosta Limited
31. Dr. Yolanda Silvera—Academia, University of Technology, Jamaica
32. Mr. Chris Lue—Jamaica Institute of Architects
33. Mr. Lascelles Dixon—Consulting Architect, Lascelles Dixon Associates Limited
34. Dr. Paul Aiken—Academia, University of the West Indies
35. Mr. Africo Adams—Structural Engineering Consultant, SMADA Consultants Limited
36. Mr. Mark Taylor—Consulting Architect, Taylor Architects Limited

37. Mr. Burchell Solomon—Government Electrical Inspectorate
38. Mr. Gary Walters—Construction Industry Council

Now that the National Building Act is in place, and implementation of the code is mandatory, future code development cycles may begin with a public hearing in which the experience of code users (designers, developers, contractors and code enforcement officials) will be aired, problems experienced and solutions offered. This will enrich the local input into the code and make it even more relevant and applicable to the Jamaica Building Industry.

Marginal Markings

Double vertical lines in the margin denote amendments and additions promulgated by the Bureau of Standards Jamaica modifying the 2018 *International Existing Building Code*.

JEBC Coordination of the Jamaica Codes

The coordination of technical provisions is one of the strengths of the Jamaica family of codes. The codes can be used as a complete set of complementary documents, which will provide users with full integration and coordination of technical provisions. Individual codes can also be used in subsets or as stand-alone documents. To make sure that each individual code is as complete as possible, some technical provisions that are relevant to more than one subject area are duplicated in some of the model codes. This allows users maximum flexibility in their application of the J-Codes.

Italicized Terms

Selected words and terms defined in Chapter 2, Definitions, are italicized where they appear in code text and the Chapter 2 definition applies. Where such words and terms are not italicized, common-use definitions apply. The words and terms selected have code-specific definitions that the user should read carefully to facilitate better understanding of the code.

Adoption

EFFECTIVE USE OF THE JAMAICA EXISTING BUILDING CODE

The *Jamaica Existing Building Code* is a model code in the *Jamaica Code* family of codes intended to provide requirements for repair and alternative approaches for alterations and additions to existing buildings. A large number of existing buildings and structures do not comply with the current building code requirements for new construction. Although many of these buildings are potentially salvageable, rehabilitation is often cost-prohibitive because compliance with all the requirements for new construction could require extensive changes that go well beyond the value of the building or the original scope of the alteration. At the same time, it is necessary to regulate construction in existing buildings that undergo additions, alterations, extensive repairs or change of building use. These activities represent an opportunity to ensure that new construction complies with the current building codes and that existing conditions are maintained, at a minimum, to their current level of compliance or are improved as required to meet basic safety levels. To accomplish this objective, and to make the alteration process easier, this code allows for options for controlled departure from full compliance with the *Jamaica Codes* dealing with new construction, while maintaining basic levels for fire prevention, structural and life safety features of the rehabilitated building.

This code provides three main options for a designer in dealing with alterations of existing buildings. These are laid out in Section 301 of this code:

OPTION 1: Work for alteration, change of building use or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Prescriptive Compliance Method given in Chapter 4.

OPTION 2: Work for alteration, change of building use or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Work Area Compliance Method given in Chapters 6 through 12.

OPTION 3: Work for alteration, change of building use or addition of all existing buildings shall be done in accordance with the Performance Compliance Method given in Chapter 13.

Under limited circumstances, a building alteration can be made to comply with the laws under which the building was originally built, as long as there has been no substantial structural damage and there will be minimal structural alteration.

Note that all repairs must comply with Chapter 4 and relocated buildings are addressed by Chapter 14.

Arrangement and Format of the 2024 JEBC

Before applying the requirements of the JEBC, it is beneficial to understand its arrangement and format. The JEBC is arranged and organized to follow logical steps that generally occur during a plan review or inspection. The JEBC is divided as follows:

Chapters	Subjects
1–2	Administrative Requirements and Definitions
3	Provisions for all Compliance Methods
4	Repairs
5	Prescriptive Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
6–12	Work Area Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
13	Performance Compliance Method for Existing Buildings
14	Relocated Buildings
15	Construction Safeguards
16	Referenced Standards

Chapters	Subjects
Appendix A	Guidelines for Seismic Retrofit of Existing Buildings
Appendix B	Supplementary Accessibility Requirements for Existing Buildings
Appendix C	Guidelines for Wind Retrofit of Existing Buildings
Resource A	Guidelines on Fire Ratings of Archaic Materials and Assemblies

The following is a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the scope and intent of the provisions of the *Jamaica Existing Building Code*:

Chapter 1 Scope and Administration. This chapter contains provisions for the application, enforcement and administration of subsequent requirements of the code. In addition to establishing the scope of the code, Chapter 1 identifies which buildings and structures come under its purview. Chapter 1 is largely concerned with maintaining "due process of law" in enforcing the regulations contained in the body of the code. Only through careful observation of the administrative provisions can the building official reasonably expect to demonstrate that "equal protection under the law" has been provided.

Chapter 2 Definitions. All defined terms in the code are provided in Chapter 2. While a defined term may only be used in one chapter or another, the meaning provided in Chapter 2 is applicable throughout the code.

Where understanding of a term's definition is especially key to or necessary for understanding of a particular code provision, the term is shown in italics wherever it appears in the code. This is true only for those terms that have a meaning that is unique to the code. In other words, the generally understood meaning of a term or phrase might not be sufficient or consistent with the meaning prescribed by the code; therefore, it is essential that the code-defined meaning be known.

Guidance regarding tense, gender and plurality of defined terms as well as guidance regarding terms not defined in this code is also provided.

Chapter 3 Provisions for All Compliance Methods. This chapter explains the three compliance options available in the code. In addition, this chapter also lays out the methods to be used for seismic design and evaluation throughout the JEBC. Finally this chapter clarifies that provisions in other I-Codes related to repairs, alterations, additions, relocation and changes in building use must also be addressed unless they conflict with the JEBC. In that case, the JEBC takes precedence.

Chapter 4 Repairs. Chapter 6 governs the repair of existing buildings. The provisions define conditions under which repairs may be made using materials and methods like those of the original construction or the extent to which repairs must comply with requirements for new buildings.

This chapter, like Chapter 14 related to relocated or moved buildings, is independent from the three methods presented by this code.

Chapter 5 Prescriptive Compliance Method. This chapter provides one of the three main options of compliance available in the JEBC for buildings and structures undergoing alteration, addition or change of building use.

Chapter 6 Classification of Work. This chapter provides an overview of the Work Area Method available as an option for rehabilitation of a building. The chapter defines the different classifications of alterations and provides general requirements for alterations, change of building use, additions and historic buildings. Detailed requirements for all of these are given in subsequent Chapters 7 through 12.

Chapter 7 Alterations—Level 1. This chapter provides the technical requirements for those existing buildings that undergo Level 1 alterations as described in Section 503, which includes replacement or covering of existing materials, elements, equipment or fixtures using new materials for the same purpose. This chapter, similar to other chapters of this code, covers all building-related subjects, such as structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and accessibility as well as the fire and life safety issues when the alterations are classified as Level 1. The purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system. This chapter is distinguished from

Chapters 8 and 9 by only involving replacement of building components with new components. In contrast, Level 2 alterations involve more space reconfiguration and Level 3 alterations involve more extensive space reconfiguration, exceeding 50 percent of the building area.

Chapter 8 Alterations—Level 2. Like Chapter 7, the purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system when a building is being altered. This chapter is distinguished from Chapters 7 and 9 by involving space reconfiguration that could be up to and including 50 percent of the area of the building. In contrast, Level 1 alterations (Chapter 7) do not involve space reconfiguration and Level 3 alterations (Chapter 9) involve extensive space reconfiguration that exceeds 50 percent of the building area. Depending on the nature of alteration work, its location within the building and whether it encompasses one or more tenants, improvements and upgrades could be required for the open floor penetrations, sprinkler system or the installation of additional means of egress such as stairs or fire escapes.

Chapter 9 Alterations—Level 3. This chapter provides the technical requirements for those existing buildings that undergo Level 3 alterations. The purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed requirements and provisions to identify the required improvements in the existing building elements, building spaces and building structural system. This chapter is distinguished from Chapters 7 and 8 by involving alterations that cover 50 percent of the aggregate area of the building. In contrast, Level 1 alterations do not involve space reconfiguration and Level 2 alterations involve extensive space reconfiguration that does not exceed 50 percent of the building area. Depending on the nature of alteration work, its location within the building and whether it encompasses one or more tenants, improvements and upgrades could be required for the open floor penetrations, sprinkler system or the installation of additional means of egress such as stairs or fire escapes. At times and under certain situations, this chapter also intends to improve the safety of certain building features beyond the work area and in other parts of the building where no alteration work might be taking place.

Chapter 10 Change of Building Use. The purpose of this chapter is to provide regulations for the circumstances when an existing building is subject to a change of building use or a change of occupancy classification. A change of building use is not to be confused with a change of occupancy classification. The *Jamaica Building Code* (JBC) defines different occupancy classifications in Chapter 3, and special occupancy requirements in Chapter 4. Within specific occupancy classifications there can be many different types of actual activities that can take place. For instance, a Group A-3 occupancy classification deals with a wide variation of different types of activities, including bowling alleys and courtrooms, indoor tennis courts and dance halls. When a facility changes use from, for example, a bowling alley to a dance hall, the occupancy classification remains A-3, but the different uses could lead to drastically different code requirements. Therefore, this chapter deals with the special circumstances that are associated with a change in the use of a building within the same occupancy classification as well as a change of occupancy classification.

Chapter 11 Additions. Chapter 11 provides the requirements for additions, which correlate to the code requirements for new construction. There are, however, some exceptions that are specifically stated within this chapter. An “Addition” is defined in Chapter 2 as “an extension or increase in the floor area, number of stories or height of a building or structure.” Chapter 11 contains the minimum requirements for an addition that is not separated from the existing building by a fire wall.

There are also requirements for storm shelters when additions are being made to Group E occupancies.

Chapter 12 Historic Buildings. This chapter provides some exceptions from code requirements when the building in question has historic value. The most important criterion for application of this chapter is that the building must be essentially accredited as being of historic significance by a state or local authority after careful review of the historical value of the building. Most, if not all, states have such authorities, as do many local jurisdictions. The agencies with such authority can be located at the state or local government level or through the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Other considerations include the structural condition of the building (i.e., is the building structurally sound), its proposed use, its impact on life safety and how the intent of the code, if not the letter, will be achieved.

Chapter 13 Performance Compliance Methods. This chapter allows for existing buildings to be evaluated so as to show that alterations, while not meeting new construction requirements, will improve the current existing situation. Provisions are based on a numerical scoring system involving 19 various safety parameters and the degree of code compliance for each issue.

Chapter 14 Relocated or Moved Buildings. Chapter 14 is applicable to any building that is moved or relocated.

This chapter, like the chapter on repairs, is independent from the three methods presented in this code.

Chapter 15 Construction Safeguards. The building construction process involves a number of known and unanticipated hazards. Chapter 15 establishes specific regulations in order to minimize the risk to the public and adjacent property. Some construction failures have resulted during the initial stages of grading, excavation and demolition. During these early stages, poorly designed and installed sheeting and shoring have resulted in ditch and embankment cave-ins. Also, inadequate underpinning of adjoining existing structures or careless removal of existing structures has produced construction failures.

There are also several fire safety and means of egress issues addressed by this chapter.

Chapter 16 Referenced Standards. The code contains numerous references to standards that are used to regulate materials and methods of construction. Chapter 16 contains a comprehensive list of all standards that are referenced in the code, including the appendices. The standards are part of the code to the extent of the reference to the standard. Compliance with the referenced standard is necessary for compliance with this code. By providing specifically adopted standards, the construction and installation requirements necessary for compliance with the code can be readily determined. The basis for code compliance is, therefore, established and available on an equal basis to the building official, contractor, designer and owner.

Chapter 16 is organized in a manner that makes it easy to locate specific standards. It lists all of the referenced standards, alphabetically, by acronym of the promulgating agency of the standard. Each agency's standards are then listed in either alphabetical or numeric order based upon the standard identification. The list also contains the title of the standard; the edition (date) of the standard referenced; any addenda included as part of the ICC adoption; and the section or sections of this code that reference the standard.

Appendix A Guidelines for the Seismic Retrofit of Existing Buildings. Appendix A provides guidelines for upgrading the seismic resistance capacity of different types of existing buildings. It is organized into separate chapters which deal with buildings of different types, including unreinforced masonry buildings, reinforced concrete and reinforced masonry wall buildings, and light-frame wood buildings.

Appendix B Supplementary Accessibility Requirements for Existing Buildings and Facilities. Chapter 11 of the *Jamaica Building Code* (JBC) contains provisions that set forth requirements for accessibility to buildings and their associated sites and facilities for people with physical disabilities. Section 305 addresses accessibility provisions and alternatives permitted in existing buildings. Appendix B was added to address accessibility in construction for items that are not typically enforceable through the traditional building code enforcement process.

Appendix C Guidelines for Wind Retrofit of Existing Buildings. This Appendix is intended to provide guidance for retrofitting existing structures to strengthen their resistance to wind forces. This appendix is similar in scope to Appendix A which addresses seismic retrofits for existing buildings except that the subject matter is related to wind retrofits. These retrofits are voluntary measures that serve to better protect the public and reduce damage from high wind events for existing buildings.

The purpose of the Appendix is to provide prescriptive alternatives for addressing retrofit of buildings in high-wind areas. Currently there are two chapters which deal with the retrofit of gable ends and the fastening of roof decks, Appendix Chapters C1 and C2, respectively.

Resource A Guidelines on Fire Ratings of Archaic Materials and Assemblies. In the process of repair and alteration of existing buildings, based on the nature and the extent of the work, the JEBC might require certain upgrades in the fire-resistance rating of building elements, at which time it becomes critical for the designers and the building officials to be able to determine the fire-resistance rating of the existing building elements as part of the overall evaluation for the assessment of the need for improvements. This resource document provides a guideline for such an evaluation for fire-resistance rating of archaic materials that is not typically found in the modern model building codes.

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