

PART

1

Administration

Chapters 1 and 2

- Chapter 1 Scope and Administration
- Chapter 2 Definitions

The administration part of the *International Residential Code* (IRC) covers the general scope, purpose, applicability, and other administrative issues related to the regulation of residential buildings by building safety departments. The administrative provisions establish the responsibilities and duties of the various parties involved in residential construction and the applicability of the technical provisions within a legal, regulatory, and code-enforcement arena.

Section R101.2 establishes the criteria for buildings that are regulated by the IRC. Buildings beyond the scope of Section R101.2 are regulated by the *International Building Code* (IBC). The remaining topics in the administration provisions of Chapter 1 include the establishment of the building safety department, duties of the building official, permits, construction documents, and inspections.

The definitions contained within the IRC are intended to reflect the special meaning of such terms within the scope of the code. As terms can often have multiple meanings within their ordinary day-to-day use or within the various disciplines of the construction industry, it is important that their meanings within the context of the IRC be understood. Most definitions used throughout the IRC are found in Chapter 2, but additional definitions specific to the applicable topics are found in the energy provisions of Chapter 11, the fuel gas provisions of Chapter 24, and the electrical provisions of Chapter 35. ■



R101.2, R202

Scope—Accessory Structures

R104.11

Alternative Materials, Design, and Methods of Construction and Equipment

R105.3.1.1

Existing Buildings in Flood Hazard Areas

R106.1.4

Information for Construction in Flood Hazard Areas

R101.2, R202

Scope—Accessory Structures

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

CHANGE SUMMARY: The maximum height for accessory structures has been increased from two to three stories above grade plane. Technical requirements have been removed from the definition, and accessory structures are now permitted to be unlimited in area.

2015 CODE: R101.2 Scope. The provisions of the *International Residential Code for One- and Two-family Dwellings* shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses not more than three stories above grade plane in height with a separate means of egress and their accessory structures not more than three stories above grade plane in height.

SECTION R202 DEFINITIONS

ACCESSORY STRUCTURE. A structure ~~not greater than 3,000 square feet (279 m²) in floor area, and not more than two stories in height, the use of which that is customarily accessory to and incidental to that of dwelling(s) and which that is located on the same lot.~~

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: In previous editions of the IRC, the definition in Section R202 placed limitations of 3,000 square feet in area and two stories on accessory structures. The 3,000-square-foot limitation was introduced in the 2006 IRC based on a concern of the potential fire load



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Accessory building

in residential accessory buildings. The area limitation has been removed from the 2015 IRC based on the residential setting of these buildings, the need for larger accessory buildings in rural areas, and the fact that dwellings and townhomes constructed under the IRC are unlimited in area. The change also recognizes that zoning regulations typically set limits for area and height of accessory buildings based on the density of housing and other factors unique to the individual jurisdiction. It was judged more appropriate to allow jurisdictions to decide what limits are placed on accessory buildings. For example, in rural areas with large lots and acreages, very large accessory buildings are routinely constructed for vehicle and farm equipment storage and to house hobby shops and workshops. In addition, definitions are not intended to contain technical requirements such as area and height limitations, which should be addressed in the applicable sections in the body of the code. The definition maintains the key elements for permitting accessory buildings to be constructed under the IRC—that they must be accessory to and incidental to that of the dwelling and located on the same lot as the dwelling.

The height limitation for accessory buildings has also been removed from the definition and placed in the scoping provisions of the IRC. The maximum height has increased to three stories above grade plane for consistency with the height limitations for dwellings and townhomes.

R104.11

Alternative Materials, Design, and Methods of Construction and Equipment



Alternative product

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CHANGE TYPE: Addition

CHANGE SUMMARY: When proposed alternatives are not approved, the reason for the disapproval must be stated in writing by the building official.

2015 CODE: R104.11 Alternative Materials, Design, and Methods of Construction and Equipment. The provisions of this code are not intended to prevent the installation of any material or to prohibit any design or method of construction not specifically prescribed by this code, provided that any such alternative has been approved. An alternative material, design or method of construction shall be approved where the building official finds that the proposed design is satisfactory and complies with the intent of the provisions of this code, and that the material, method or work offered is, for the purpose intended, at least not less than the equivalent of that prescribed in this code. Compliance with the specific performance-based provisions of the International Codes shall be an alternative to the in lieu of specific requirements of this code ~~shall also be permitted as an alternate.~~ Where the alternative material, design or method of construction is not approved, the building official shall respond in writing, stating the reasons the alternative was not approved.

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: When a building official denies a proposal for using an alternative material, design or method of construction, the reason for denial must be provided in writing to the applicant. This new requirement mirrors the permit application provisions in Section R105.3.1, which require the building official to state in writing the reasons for rejection of a permit application. This change assumes reasons for responding to the applicant in writing are in order to ensure effective communication and due process of law. The applicant, using a written denial, may determine whether to modify the product or design, substitute a new product or method of construction, or correct errors in application of the alternate. The new language is added to all of the International Codes for consistency of application.

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

CHANGE SUMMARY: Determination of substantial improvement for existing buildings in flood hazard areas is the responsibility of the building official. The related provisions are now consolidated in Section R105.3.1.1.

2015 CODE: R105.3.1.1 Determination of Substantially Improved or Substantially Damaged Existing Buildings in Flood Hazard Areas. For applications for reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, alteration, repair or other improvement of existing buildings or structures located in a flood hazard area as established by Table R301.2(1), the building official shall examine or cause to be examined the construction documents and shall make a determination ~~prepare a finding~~ with regard to the value of the proposed work. For buildings that have sustained damage of any origin, the value of the proposed work shall include the cost to repair the building or structure to its predamage condition. If the building official finds that the value of proposed work equals or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the building or structure before the damage has occurred or the improvement is started, ~~the finding shall be provided to the board of appeals for a determination of substantial improvement or substantial damage.~~ Applications determined by the board of appeals to constitute substantial improvement or substantial damage the proposed work is a substantial improvement or restoration of substantial damage and the building official shall require all existing portions of the entire building or structure to meet the requirements of R322.

~~**R112.2.1 Determination of Substantial Improvement in Flood Hazard Areas.** When the building official provides a finding required in Section R105.3.1.1, the board of appeals shall determine whether the value of the proposed work constitutes a substantial improvement. For the purpose of this determination, a substantial improvement shall mean~~

R105.3.1.1 continues

R105.3.1.1

Existing Buildings in Flood Hazard Areas



Flood-prone construction

R105.3.1.1 continued

any repair, reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or improvement of a building or structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the building or structure before the improvement or repair is started. ~~If~~ Where the building or structure has sustained substantial damage, ~~all~~ repairs necessary to restore the building or structure to its pre-damaged condition shall be ~~are~~ considered substantial improvements regardless of the actual repair work performed. The term shall ~~does~~ not include either of the following:

1. Improvements of a building or structure required to correct existing health, sanitary, or safety code violations identified by the building official and which are the minimum necessary to assure safe living conditions; or
2. Any alteration of a historic building or structure, provided that the alteration will not preclude the continued designation as a historic building or structure. For the purposes of this exclusion, a historic building shall be any of the following is:
 - 2.1 Listed or preliminarily determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
 - 2.2 Determined by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior as contributing to the historical significance of a registered historic district or a district preliminarily determined to qualify as an historic district.
 - 2.3 Designated as historic under a state or local historic preservation program that is approved by the Department of Interior.

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: The criteria used to determine substantial improvement or substantial damage for existing buildings in flood hazard areas has been moved from the Building Board of Appeals provisions in Section R112.2.1 to Section R105.3.1.1 related to the building official's action on a permit application. The language requiring the Building Board of Appeals to make a determination of substantial improvement in flood hazard areas has been removed from Section R112.2. In effect, this determination is now a one-step process rather than a two-step process. It relies on the building official to determine whether work on existing buildings in flood hazard areas meets the definitions for "substantial improvement" and "substantial damage," rather than having the building official make a finding and then having the Board of Appeals make a determination based on that finding.

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

CHANGE SUMMARY: Construction documents for dwellings in Coastal A Zones shall include the elevation of the bottom of the lowest horizontal structural member.

2015 CODE: R106.1.34 Information for Construction in Flood Hazard Areas. For buildings and structures located in whole or in part in flood hazard areas as established by Table R301.2(1), construction documents shall include:

1. Delineation of flood hazard areas, floodway boundaries and flood zones and the design flood elevation, as appropriate.
2. The elevation of the proposed lowest floor, including basement; in areas of shallow flooding (AO zones), the height of the proposed lowest floor, including basement, above the highest adjacent finished grade.
3. The elevation of the bottom of the lowest horizontal structural member in coastal high hazard areas (V Zone) and in Coastal A Zones where such zones are delineated on flood hazard maps identified in Table R301.2(1) or otherwise designated by the jurisdiction.
4. If design flood elevations are not included on the community's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), the building official and the applicant shall obtain and reasonably utilize any design flood elevation and floodway data available from other sources.

R106.1.4 continues

R106.1.4

Information for Construction in Flood Hazard Areas



Photo Courtesy of Chesterfield/Danbro

Wave scour of a dwelling foundation

R106.1.4 continued

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: Dwellings in areas designated as “Coastal A Zones” are required to meet the requirements of Section R322.3 for dwellings in coastal high-hazard areas (Zone V). A new exception in Section R322.3 allows backfilled stemwall foundations rather than open foundations (pilings or columns) if the foundation is designed to account for wave action, debris impact, and local scour in the Coastal A Zones. These dwellings must have marked on the construction documents the elevation of the bottom of the lowest horizontal member in the structure.