

Notes From the Commish The Codes They Are A-Changin'

By: Curtis Meskus, Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer
building.zeo@townofcharlton.net

Come contractors and builders, throughout the state, and embrace the new code. We can lend a hand, and work together to understand, the new code is in hand, the old code is rapidly agin'. Get out the new code, set aside the old code, for the codes they are a-changin'. My apologies to Bob Dylan and his song *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, ©1964.

After many fits and starts the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) in conjunction with the International Code Council (ICC), through a long and arduous process has published the 7th edition of the Single and Two-Family Building Code. On April 1, 2007 the Massachusetts Secretary of State formally published Sections 51 through 120, of 780 Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), these chapters will supersede what we now refer to as Chapter 36 of 780 CMR on October 1, 2007.

What does this mean? First, this change only applies to Single and Two - Family Dwellings, multiple family homes (three or more) and so called commercial work will be controlled by the 6th edition of 780 CMR for the foreseeable future. Second, from now until October 1, 2007, the applicant has the choice of applying for a building permit under either the 6th or 7th edition of the code, and until the permit is closed out, the provisions of the code selected apply. Projects whose permit application is received after October 1, 2007 will have to comply with the requirements of the 7th edition.

The next issue is how do you obtain a copy of the 7th edition of the code? The code is available from the State Bookstore, State House, Room 116, Boston MA, 02133; phone 617-727-2834 or on line at

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/spr/sprcat/agencies/780.htm> the cost is \$46.00 with all fees (the format of this is similar to the 6th edition). Or from the ICC website at <http://www.iccsafe.org/>, this version is loose leaf with the option to buy tabs, the non member cost is \$88.00 plus shipping (we have several copies of this in the office, they are nice). Both versions come with a CD to install on your computer. The BBRS web site has unofficial versions of both the 6th & 7th editions, [click here](#).

The 7th edition of the Single and Two - Family Dwellings code is based on the 2003 International Resident Code (IRC) published by the ICC. The ICC was established in 1994 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a single set of comprehensive and coordinated national model construction codes. The founders of the ICC are Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), and Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc. (SBCCI). Massachusetts has taken the IRC and modified it to comply with certain statutory requirements and issues relevant to Massachusetts.

There are a number of changes that are found in the 7th edition, some more substantial than others, the following are the highlights but not every change is listed in this article. Some of this information has been taken from the BBRS web site.

Numbering – the 7th edition will be divided into two (2) documents; the Code for Single- and Two-Family Dwellings and the Basic Building Code for all other structures, both identified as 780 CMR. The Basic Code will have sections 1 through 50 with the Single- and Two-Family Dwellings consisting of sections 51 through 120, both with appendices.

Licensing - The new code prescribes several new license requirements in 780 CMR 110.R5 for demolition, window and siding, pool construction and others to be phased in with some grandfather provisions; certification requirements in 780 CMR 110.R3 for dealers of manufactured building products; and changes pertaining to building official certification requirements in 780 CMR 110.R7.

Administrative - Better defines roles and responsibilities of those involved in the design, construction and inspection of single- and two-family homes.

Design – Section 5110.7 of the new code defines what is to be considered a minimally acceptable set of construction documents, stating that construction documents shall be drawn upon suitable material. Electronic media documents are permitted to be submitted when approved by the building official.

Construction documents shall be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of the work proposed and show in detail that the work will conform to the provisions of this code and relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations, as determined by the building official. Inspections now includes a check list provided in the code signed and submitted by the applicant prior to the issuance of the occupancy permit to the building official, that to the best of his/her knowledge, the work has been executed in accordance with the provisions of this code.

Construction – Section 5116.1 expands and more clearly defines the role of the licensed construction supervisor (or other responsible party) stating at a minimum, the license holder, or responsible registered design professional if so employed to perform construction services, as identified on the building permit application or his/her licensed designee, shall be present on the building site to approve construction, reconstruction, alterations, removal or demolition at certain key times in the project.

Exception: Any Home Owner performing work for which a building permit is required shall be exempt from the licensing provisions of Section 5108.3.5, provided that if a Home Owner engages a person(s) for hire to do such work, that such Home Owner shall act as supervisor and

shall be subject to all applicable provisions of this section. This exception shall not apply to the field erection of manufactured buildings constructed pursuant to this code and Special Regulation 780 CMR 110.R3 as listed in Section 110.

Technical – The new code prescribes several new technical requirements including section 5313.2 requiring the installation of heat detectors; section 5313.3 requiring carbon monoxide detectors; and section 5313.4 requiring the installation of automatic sprinklers, in accordance with NFPA 13, 13R or 13D for dwellings having an aggregate area greater than 14, 400 square feet including basements, but not including garages and unfinished attics.

Changes in snow and wind loads will affect rafter sizing and connection requirements based on lessons learned from weather patterns and lessons learned from weather events. Other changes include deck and balcony loading with attachment requirements section 5502.2.1, some changes to handrails and guarding are found in section 5311 & 5312, allowance for escape through window wells per section 5310. Foundation backfill compaction has been added in section 5404.1.7. Chimney, fireplace and flue lining installation are enhanced in section 60; energy conservation is clarified in chapter 61.

Chapters 63 through 90; deals with electrical, plumbing and heating requirements, predominately by reference to applicable related codes. Chapter 93 address Repairs, Renovations, Additions, Demolition and Change of Use of Existing One- and Two-Family Dwellings, a new chapter specifically inserted to make this code complete. Chapters 110 and the appendices number 120 have information to support licensing and supporting material.

Both the Building Commissioner and the Local Inspector are and will continue to attend training opportunities that will allow us to understand the changes brought forward by the new codes and will provide interpretations, guidance and seminars for the users of the Building Codes in Charlton.

May 2007