



FACT SHEET

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2005 Building Safety Week survey

New Home Code Violations

In construction of new homes, code officials surveyed identified the most common code violation to be: structural and wood framing problems (30%) including improper framing techniques, inadequate framing fastening, improper notching and boring in load-bearing walls, and fire blocking or fire stopping installation problems. Grading, foundation, footing and concrete problems (24%) were second on the list. Proper grading is necessary to ensure that rain and snowmelt flow away from the house. Exit (egress) was also noted (11%) especially problems with stairway handrails.

Existing Home Code Violations

Electrical problems, structural and wood framing violations, exit problems and fire safety related issues are the most commonly cited code violations found in existing homes. In more than 15% of cases, electrical issues such as shorted or dead outlets and missing electrical junction box covers are identified as code violations. Framing problems are recognized in 14% of code violations found. Problems with egress and fire issues are cited in 13% of cases, most notably handrails and stairways, lack of accessibility to windows and inoperable or improperly installed smoke detectors.

New Building Code Violations

The primary issue is structural and wood framing problems, followed by permit protocol and egress. 24% of violations fell into the structural area, with fire blocking and general framing issues cited most often. Permit protocol makes up 16% of violations. Examples include plumbing and wiring done before licensed tradesmen obtain permits and occupancy prior to final inspection. Egress concerns compose 15% of violations. Issues such as stairs and guardrails and improper locks on exit doors are representative examples.

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Existing Building Code Violations

21% of code officials found identified egress, followed closely by fire-related violations, 17%, electrical, 12% and administrative violations 12%. Egress issues include inadequate exit signage, obstructed or missing exit pathways, and failure to maintain egress lighting and signs. Fire related violations include fire extinguishers not being properly maintained, and defective and disconnected fire systems, cited by 17% of respondents. Exposed wiring, no support for light fixtures in drop ceilings, and improper circuit breakers and wire size were noted by 12% respondents. Related to permit protocol, instructions not followed, illegal alterations or conversions, and deviating from plans or engineering exemplify issues identified by 12% of those surveyed.

Sprinklers in New Homes

78% of respondents indicated sprinklers are not required in new homes. In certain cases, such as when square footage exceeds 5,000, when second or third stories are built, when the home is used for assisted living or boarders, sprinklers are required.

Sprinklers in New Buildings

70% of respondents said sprinklers are required in new buildings. However, circumstances vary depending on height, occupancy requirements and other issues.

Sprinkler Retrofits in Existing Buildings

44% of respondents said, retrofits in existing buildings are not required. Circumstances vary, for example, 17% stated that with certain minimum number of stories sprinkler retrofits are required. Other circumstances include renovation, occupancy use change, or square foot minimums. Fire prevention measures also were noted as alternatives to sprinklers. 10% indicated that retrofits are required in all cases.

Typical respondent

The typical respondent is a building official (40%), chief building official (27%) or building inspector (13%). Typically, he or she works for a jurisdiction with a population under 50,000 (70%), though sometimes for larger jurisdictions (20% from population bases of 50,000 to 150,000, and 11% over 150,000). Most respondents maintain authority over cities, townships or towns (72%), some over counties (11%) and states (4%), and a few at the federal level (1%).

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2005 Building Safety Week survey fact sheet/Add Two

Source: 2005 Building Safety Week Survey sponsored by the International Code Council Foundation

The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states that adopt codes choose the International Codes developed by the International Code Council.

The International Code Council Foundation is dedicated to changing the devastating effects of natural disasters and other building tragedies by promoting ideas, methods and technologies that encourage the construction of durable, sustainable buildings and homes

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