

## PREFACE

### Introduction

The State of Florida first mandated statewide building codes during the 1970s at the beginning of the modern construction boom. The first law required all municipalities and counties to adopt and enforce one of the four state recognized model codes known as the state minimum building codes. During the early 1990s a series of natural disasters, together with the increasing complexity of building construction regulation in vastly changed markets precipitated the comprehensive review of the state building code system. The study revealed that building code adoption and enforcement was inconsistent throughout the state and those local codes thought to be the strongest proved inadequate when tested by major hurricane events. The consequences were devastation to lives and economies and a statewide property insurance crisis. The response was reform of the state building construction system which placed emphasis on uniformity and accountability.

The Florida Building Code (the Code) is the central piece of the new building code system. This single statewide unified code is developed and maintained by the Florida Building Commission. It is administered and enforced by local jurisdictions and certain state agencies which may, under certain strictly defined conditions, amend requirements to be more stringent. The reformed building code system also establishes accountability for licensed contractors and designers and for local enforcement jurisdictions. It also establishes building code education requirements for all licensees and uniform procedures and quality control in a product approval system.

The Code supersedes all local codes and is automatically effective on the 2001 date established by state law. The Code is based on a national model building code and national consensus standards and incorporates all state agency building codes and regulations. It has been harmonized with the Florida Fire Prevention Code to established unified and consistent standards. Together, the Florida Building Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code contain all state standards for the design and construction of buildings in the state of Florida. All local amendments to these codes may be obtained from the Florida Department of Community Affairs or the Florida Department of Insurance, State Fire Marshal, respectively.

The Code is compiled in four volumes with the National Electrical Code<sup>®</sup> adopted by reference. The four volumes are: Building, which includes energy, accessibility and state agency regulations; Plumbing; Mechanical; and Fuel Gas. The National Electrical Code<sup>®</sup> is reference standard NFPA 70-1999<sup>®</sup> which must be obtained separately.

### Development

Chapter 98-287, Laws of Florida, established the Florida Building Commission and directed it to develop the Code. In October 1998 the Commission selected the model codes which form the base requirements of the Code. These base codes were then amended to tailor requirements, including energy, accessibility and hurricane resistance, to be Florida specific. The draft Code was presented to the 2000 Florida Legislature which directed specific changes and authorized, by Chapter 2000-141, Laws of Florida, the final Code to become effective July 1, 2001. The Commission completed the changes and reconsideration directed by the Legislature and adopted this first edition of the Code by administrative rule in January 2001.

The base codes include: the Standard Building Code, 1997 edition; the National Electrical Code<sup>®</sup>, 1999 edition; the Standard Plumbing Code, 1997 edition; the International Mechanical Code, 1998 edition; the International Fuel Gas Code, 1997 edition; and, structural requirements of the South Florida Building Code as they apply to the "High Velocity Hurricane Zone." State codes adopted include the Florida Energy Efficiency Code for Building Construction and the Florida Accessibility Code for Building Construction and the Fair Housing Guidelines.

The base codes were amended through an extensive public review and input process. Nine technical advisory committees (TAC) were established using ANSI guidelines for consensus standards committees. The TACs are: Joint Building Fire (a joint committee of the Commission and the State Fire Marshal); Building Structural; Plumbing and Fuel Gas; Mechanical; Electrical; Energy; Accessibility; Special Occupancy (state agency construction and facility licensing regulations); and Administrative/Enforcement. The TACs reviewed proposed amendments to the Code and made recommendations to the Commission. The Commission obtained public comment on the first working draft compiled from the TAC recommendations then refined the Code through development of two additional drafts. The third draft was presented to the 2000 Legislature for review and approval.

### **Adoption and Maintenance**

The Florida Building Code is adopted and updated by the Florida Building Commission. The first edition and future updates and editions supersede all previous codes upon adoption by the Commission and do not require adoption by local jurisdictions. Minimum requirements for permitting, plans review and inspections are established by the Code, and local jurisdictions may adopt additional administrative requirements which are more stringent. Local technical amendments are subject to strict criteria established by s. 553.73, F.S. They are subject to Commission review when it updates the Code triennially and are subject to appeal to the Commission according to the procedures established by s. 553.73, F.S.

### **Marginal Markings**

Short horizontal lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a change from the requirements of the base codes except where a change was minor.

Dotted lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a change from the 2001 Florida Building Code to the 2002 revisions.

Deletion indicators (☆) are provided in the margin where a paragraph or item listing has been deleted if the deletion resulted in a change of requirements.

### **Acknowledgments**

The Florida Building Code is the work product of hundreds of building designers, contractors, regulators and other interested parties. Its development spanned two and one half years and involved more than one hundred thousand hours of volunteer and staff time. The majority of the Code is derived from the base codes and the efforts of the organizations which developed and maintain these codes and the standards referenced within them. These organizations include the Southern Building Code Congress International, the International Code Council, the National Fire Protection Association, the Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals, the Miami-Dade County Building Department and Code Compliance Office and all organizations listed in the reference standards chapters of each volume of the Code. Special acknowledgment is given to staff and the hundreds of volunteers who committed their time and effort to development of the code and to the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium for its facilitation and consensus processes design. Their commitment and efforts to develop a final consensus code are the basis of its strength and value to the citizens of Florida.

