VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Division of Building and Fire Regulation
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Richmond, Virginia 23219

STATE BUILDING CODE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD

INTERPRETATION BOOKLET

Containing Interpretations Applicable to the 2009 Editions

of the

Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code

and the

Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code

July 2011

PREFACE

The Virginia State Building Code Technical Review Board is a governor-appointed board within the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The board is responsible for hearing appeals arising under the application of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) and other building and fire-related regulations of the Department. As a secondary function, the Board interprets the provisions of the USBC and the SFPC and makes recommendations to the Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development for future modification, amendment or repeal of such provisions.

The interpretation booklets contain those interpretations of the Review Board which are still applicable to the code in effect at a given time, rather than a compilation of all interpretations ever issued by the Review Board. The older interpretation booklets and compilations may be reviewed in connection with existing buildings or situations and are therefore still available from the Department, on its website and on the websites of organizations involved in building and fire-related activities. However, only interpretations in this booklet are applicable to the 2009 editions of the USBC and the SFPC. Interpretations which were issued under a previous edition of the code, but which are still applicable to the current code, have been editorially changed to correct section references and terminology.

As additional interpretations are issued by the Review Board, they will be posted on the Department's website. Interpretation requests may be submitted by any code enforcement personnel. If an appeal situation exists or potentially exists, then the Review Board may not consider the interpretation request. If requests are submitted by personnel other than a building or fire official, then the appropriate official will be contacted to assure the request is desired.

Interpretation requests may be submitted on a form available on the Department's website. Inquiries or assistance may be obtained by contacting the Office of the Review Board, within the Technical Assistance Services Office (TASO), Department of Housing and Community Development, 600 East Main Street, Suite 300, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or by calling (804) 371-7140 or 371-7150.

INTERPRETATIONS
of the
2009 USBC – Virginia Construction Code (VCC)

VCC Section 103.1
Code Interpretation No. 2/03
First Issued: 08/17/07, 2003 Edition

QUESTION: Are the heavy metal storage or shipping containers that fit onto a tractor trailer or railcar when placed on the ground accessory to a business or residence regulated by the USBC?

ANSWER: Shipping containers are not regulated under the USBC unless they are constructed or altered on site or there is a change of occupancy in the use of the container.

VCC Section 104.1
Code Interpretation No. 2/06
First Issued: 06/20/08, 2006 Edition

QUESTION: In jurisdictions which have not elected to enforce the Virginia Maintenance Code, does the third paragraph of Section 104.1 give authority to investigate complaints of immediate and imminent threats to the health and safety from any complainant rather than just complaints by a tenant of a residential rental unit that is the subject of such complaint?

ANSWER: No, this provision would only apply to enforcement actions under the previous paragraph unless the locality has elected to enforce the Virginia Maintenance Code.

VCC Section 113.6
Code Interpretation No. 6/06
First Issued: 10/15/10, 2006 Edition

QUESTION: Does Section 113.6 require a written inspection report on the jobsite if one is sent electronically to the permit holder?

ANSWER: No, Section 113.6 does not require a notice to be left on the jobsite. The use of an electronic method is written notice provided the notice is reasonably calculated to get to the permit holder, which should be based on legal advice.

VCC Section 113.8
Code Interpretation No. 7/90
First Issued: 07/19/91, 1990 Edition

QUESTION: Is the electrical service to a building (dwelling unit, etc.) required to be energized in order for an electrical inspector to perform a final inspection?

ANSWER: The building official is authorized by Sections 113.1, 113.3 and 113.4 to perform various inspections of buildings under construction to determine compliance with the provisions of the USBC. In accordance with Section 113.8, the building official is required to perform a final inspection to insure that all work conforms with the USBC. The building official has authority to require that building electrical systems, components or devices be energized as part of the final inspection.

VCC Section 202 (Definition of "night club")
Code Interpretation No. 1/09
First Issued: 06/17/11, 2009 Edition

QUESTION: How do you apply the "main use" terminology in the definition of night club?

ANSWER: Determining the main use of a structure is a factual question to be made at the discretion of the local official.

VCC Sections 903.2.8 and 1021.2
Code Interpretation No. 26/90
First Issued: 11/20/92, 1990 Edition

Table 1021.2 specifies the requirements for stories with one exit. A building of Group R-2 with four dwelling units per floor, three stories above grade and equipped throughout with a sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 or 903.3.1.2 would be allowed to have one exit.

QUESTION: Does the USBC permit that same building to have one exit when it meets Exception No. 2 of Section 903.2.8, which eliminates the requirement for a sprinkler system?

ANSWER: Yes. To achieve compliance with Section 1021.2, Section 903.2.8 equates a three story building in which every two dwelling units are separated with a two hour fire barrier to that of a three story building provided with sprinklers in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 or 903.3.1.2.

VCC Section 2701.1 (National Electrical Code Sections 230.40 and 230.70)
Code Interpretation No. 7/06
First Issued: 11/19/10, 2006 Edition

GIVEN: When you have multiple tenants in a building such as apartments or retail shops, there will be one service drop coming to the building and it will connect to a row of meters. Often each meter will feed one disconnect or panel located at the individual tenant space as long as all of the service conductors are located on the exterior of the building. Each space will have fire separation. If there are ten tenant spaces then each would have its own disconnect located on the exterior of its space. This is more economical for the owners and tenants. All wiring ahead of the service disconnecting means is on the outside of the building.

QUESTION: Do all of the disconnects have to be grouped at the meters which will limit you to six disconnects at one location, or can one set of service conductors be run from each meter to each tenant space?

ANSWER: One set of service conductors may be run from each meter to each tenant space provided the service entrance conductors are on the outside of the building with disconnects in accordance with Section 230.70(A).

VCC Section 2801.1 (International Mechanical Code Section 602.1)
Code Interpretation No. 20/90
First Issued: 07/17/92, 1990 Edition

QUESTION: Does Section 602.1 prohibit completely sealed (combustion chamber and combustion air) fuel-fired mechanical appliances from being located in a return-air plenum?

ANSWER: Yes. Section 602.1 prohibits the installation of fuel-fired equipment in plenums. However, technical data, research reports or other information may be submitted to the code official to substantiate the approval of a modification request for the use of a specific unit listed for that purpose.

INTERPRETATIONS
of the
2009 Statewide Fire Prevention Code

Section 315.3.1
Code Interpretation No. 3/06
First Issued: 03/20/09, 2006 Edition

QUESTION: Does Section 315.3.1 mean that when a building is required by the code under which it was constructed to be protected by automatic sprinklers, outdoor storage of combustible materials under eaves is prohibited except where automatic sprinklers are installed under eaves?

ANSWER: It means that sprinklers under the eaves are only necessary to allow storage if specifically required by the code, including the sprinkler standard and its exceptions, under which the building was constructed.

Section 602.1 (Use of the term "building" in the definition of "commercial cooking appliance")
Code Interpretation No. 4/06
First Issued: 11/20/09, 2006 Edition

QUESTION: Is a trailer or panel-truck considered to be a building under the SFPC, irrespective of whether it's immobilized or anchored?

ANSWER: No.