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R.W. Sullivan Engineering Code Flash

August 18, 2008

Massachusetts Adopts 7th edition of Commercial Building Code

With the publication of the supplement to the Central Register for August 22, Massachusetts has officially adopted a 7th edition of its statewide commercial Building Code (780 CMR), effective September 1, 2008. The commercial code covers all building types and use groups other than detached 1 and 2 family dwellings. The 7th edition 1 and 2 family code, based on the 2003 International Residential Code, has been in full force and effect since January 1, 2008. The new commercial code will be available in a separate volume shortly after the adoption date (hopefully the first or second week of September) from the State House Bookstore (Room 116 of the State House, www.sec.state.ma.us/spr/spridx.htm). There will be a six month concurrency period during which time permit applications may be submitted under either edition of the code. After March 1, 2009, the 6th edition will be repealed and the 7th edition will be in full force and effect.

The adoption of the 7th edition marks a new era in the evolution of the Massachusetts State Building Code. This will be the first edition to be based on the International Building Code (IBC 2003), a national model code produced by the International Code Council (ICC) which was formed by three previously competing code organizations. Adoption of the IBC brings Massachusetts into alignment with surrounding states, many of which have been enforcing the IBC for years. IBC 2003 contains a new methodology for calculating maximum allowed height and area, plus some minor tweaks to the Use Group categories in Chapter 3 and interesting new provisions in Chapter 7, "*fire-resistance rated construction*", and Chapter 10, "*Means of Egress*". Modifications to the model code language have been introduced, either in order to coincide with Massachusetts General Law or at the recommendation of technical subcommittees. Large portions of Chapter 4 "*Special Detailed Requirements Based on Use and Occupancy*" as well as all of Chapter 1 "*Administration*", Chapter 9 "*Fire Protection Systems*" and Chapter 34 "*Existing Structures*" will remain unique to Massachusetts, although these chapters contain new requirements as well. Chapter 13 "*Energy Efficiency*" will retain its unique Massachusetts content as in the 6th edition (with minor modifications) until October 6, 2008, at which time the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) will replace the Massachusetts approach with a choice of compliance with either ASHRAE 90.1 (2007) or Chapter 5 of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) 2006 w/2007 supplement. A requirement that Massachusetts adopt the latest version of the IECC within 12 months of its release contained in the recently enacted "Green Communities" legislation suggests that new energy code requirements

may be published separately for the foreseeable the future. Modifications have also been made to the contents of Chapter 16 “*Structural Designs*”, Chapter 17 “*Structural Tests and Special Inspections*”, Chapter 18 “*Soils and Foundations*”, Chapter 19 “*Concrete*”, Chapter 21 “*Masonry*”, Chapter 22 “*Steel*”, and Chapter 23 “*Wood*” based on recommendations from advisory subcommittees.

New Elevator Cab Dimensional Requirements

The Board of Elevator Regulations (248 CMR) has adopted new dimensional requirements for medical emergency (stretcher-size) elevators, effective for all projects receiving a building permit after January 1, 2010. The new regulations require a cab able to accommodate a stretcher 24” wide by 84” long, with 5” radius corners in its horizontal position. This is an increase from the currently required stretcher size of 22½” wide by 75” long. Medical emergency elevators are required for all new buildings or complete new additions to existing buildings. A “complete new addition” is defined as “a hoistway constructed outside the confines or footprint of the existing building”.

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