



Building Officials Association of Florida, Inc.

Transitioning to a Florida Building Code Supplement Format

When the Florida Building Code began development in the late 1990's there were several decisions made that seemed appropriate at the time:

- Use an established code as the basis of the code (SBCCI, now the IBC)
- Create easily identifiable "Florida Specific" provisions that would address specific Florida needs
- Integrate those provisions into the base code and publish it as the "Florida Building Code"

The mantra that we all bought into at the time was that an integrated code would be more convenient for every category of user; design professionals, contractors, product manufacturers, and code compliance officials.

After three triennial code change cycles we have discovered that the integrated Florida Building Code is actually less convenient and less efficient for all users. BOAF is on record as supporting the transition of the Florida Building Code from an integrated format to a supplement format. We have repeatedly stated that position at every Commission and TAC meeting during the just concluded 2010 code change cycle. There are many myths being circulated about this position.

Here are the facts about this issue:

Changing formats would not eliminate any "Florida Specific" provision currently adopted for the 2010 Florida Building Code. Existing Florida Specific code provisions, including all of the HVHZ provisions would simply be moved to a supplement document.

A supplement format will improve compliance because the "Florida Specific" provisions would be readily identified. With an integrated format a user must play hide and seek with the "Florida Specific" provisions. For example, in the plumbing, mechanical, fuel gas, and accessibility codes the supplement would only be a dozen pages or less. These provisions are easily lost in the hundreds of pages in the base code.

The supplement format identifies each base code provision that is modified by a "Florida Specific" provision. This allows existing comparison software to identify

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conflicts with the base code as the base code is updated.

The current integrated format is maintained manually with thousands of hours of staff time spent formatting the codes before and after each code change cycle. Updating the supplement, following a code change cycle, will take very little staff time to edit.

A supplement format would publish the code changes as adopted, eliminating almost all of the glitches created in the integration process.

With less time needed to integrate the “Florida Specific” provisions, the FBC publication will be available for implementation much sooner, closing the lag time from the publication of the base code.

The problem with the present integrated format is that it is difficult and time consuming for users to identify the “Florida Specific” provisions without reviewing the entire document.

Design professionals from around the country, and the world, use the Florida Building Code to design projects to be built in Florida. Most are familiar with the base code, the International family of Codes. With an integrated Florida Building Code they must review the entire code to determine what provisions are different in Florida. That review is much more efficient when the “Florida Specific” requirements are assembled together in supplement format.

Contractors initially asked for a building code document that was all inclusive. That desire proved to be unrealistic, because Building Codes by their nature reference hundreds of other documents that contain specific requirements beyond the provisions provided in the text of the code. The integrated building code volumes are not all inclusive documents. To understand the volume of referenced documents, review the reference document index in Chapter 35 of the Building Volume, and Chapter 43 in the Residential Volume.

There are thousands of products, manufactured all over the world, that are used in construction projects in Florida. Very few product manufacturers find specific prescriptive or performance criteria in the Florida Building Code that are not contained in the base code. For those manufacturers that do have to follow Florida Specific requirements, most will tell you that “Florida Specific” provisions would be easier to follow when assembled in a supplement format. Test protocols are already published in a separate volume that is, for all practical purposes, a supplement.

Building Code Compliance personnel must pass a knowledge based test prior to receiving a license to practice their profession. That test is based on the IBC, not

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the Florida Building Code. Building Code Compliance personnel, like design professionals, contractors and product manufacturers, will find it easier to learn what is different in the Florida Building Code when the provisions are assembled in a supplement.

Several other states use the supplement format, including Georgia and North Carolina. The Florida Electrical Code has always been used in a supplement format, primarily because NFPA will not allow other provisions to be integrated into their code. Electrical contractors will confirm that the supplement format is efficient and effective.

Moving all of the Florida Building Code “Florida Specific” provisions to a supplement format for each volume will provide numerous efficiencies, as follows:

- A supplement format will provide clear identification of the provisions that address a “Florida Specific” need, saving users valuable time and improving compliance
- A supplement format will make maintenance of the code easier for staff and the commission, producing huge cost savings
- A supplement format will reduce the cost of publishing the supplements versus publishing the integrated code documents. BOAF has demonstrated that most volumes of the code have very few “Florida Specific” provisions; resulting in a supplement document for most volumes that would only be a dozen or so pages; easily downloaded and/or printed for free.
- A supplement format will be easier to teach to design professionals, contractors, and building code officials

Contractors, Architects, Engineers and Building Officials, Plans Examiners and Inspectors,

Your support for transitioning the Florida Building Code to a supplement format is encouraged. Legislation has been proposed that will assist in this initiative. SB396 will be considered by the Community Affairs Committee on Monday March 7. Members of the committee need to hear from you. Please send a short e-mail to the committee supporting the supplement format.

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