

BUILDING CODES – HOW DO THEY HELP YOU?

WHAT IS A CODE?

A Code is a collection of requirements which pertain to a specific subject, to regulate specific practices.

A Traffic Code is a good example. A Traffic Code is a collection of requirements (driving and parking regulations) intended to regulate practices for automobile use on public thoroughfares.

A Building Code is a collection of regulations (such as exit signs and fire protection systems) which regulate specific practices (such as designing, constructing or remodelling buildings).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND USE OF CODES

Codes are not a product of modern civilization but, rather, have evolved from the distant past. One of the earliest requirements regarding regulation of a specific subject is found in “Babylonia” in the Code of Hammurabi. One of the articles held the builder liable by stating that if the house collapsed and killed the householder, the builder “shall be slain”.

By the latter part of the 19th Century widespread loss of life and property by fire led to the first set of building regulations in North America.

In 1905 the first modern code laid the basis for testing methodology, specifications and the various formats used in today’s codes. Its specific purpose was to reduce fire hazards, but it had a more general and humanitarian purpose: To protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Today’s Manitoba Building Code carries this early 20th Century philosophy one step further by creating uniformity in building codes in each community across Manitoba and providing a process for code regulations to reflect current technology in construction methods and materials.

THE PURPOSE OF CODES

No matter what the specific subject may be, construction, maintenance, fire protection or plumbing, ALL codes have the same purpose: To protect health, safety and welfare of the building occupants.

HOW DO CODES HELP YOU?

- **Codes protect the public health, safety and welfare.**
We all need protection from tragedy due to fire, structural collapse and general deterioration of the structures that surround us: our homes, schools, stores and manufacturing facilities. Building codes provide protection by reducing potential hazards to building occupants – you and I.
- **Codes keep construction costs down.**
Codes provide uniformity in the construction industry. This uniformity permits builders and material manufacturers to do business on a larger scale; Province wide, regionally or national, than if construction was regulated. Larger scale allows cost savings which ultimately benefit the consumer.

- **Codes provide consistent standards in construction.**
Codes establish predictable and consistent minimum standards which are applied to the quality and durability of construction and construction materials.
- **Codes contribute to the well-being of a community.**
The preservation of life and safety as well as the maintenance of property values over time are a direct result of the application and enforcement of the codes relating to building.

THE USES OF CODES

Codes provide standards for the design and construction of homes and businesses. Codes are used by architects, engineers, contractors, builders and materials manufacturers to ensure safety, economy and consistency of construction. You, as a homeowner, landlord or business owner, have a substantial investment which can be seriously jeopardized through code violations. Plan review prior and inspections made during construction verify that the building code regulations have been followed.

WHO ADMINISTERS AND ADOPTS THE MANITOBA BUILDING CODE?

The Province of Manitoba is responsible for the development of cost effective building regulations. Each municipality is then responsible for the enforcement of the Code in the Areas in which it has jurisdiction. In Pinawa the Building/Plumbing Inspector for the Local Government District of Pinawa has jurisdiction over houses and buildings up to 600 m² building area.

PERMIT FEES

Permit fees have been established to help defray the cost of enforcement. Generally, fees account for less than one percent of the overall costs of a building project. Public protection is thus obtained in a cost-effective manner with the entire process, from plan review to field inspection, carried out by professionals.

DID YOU KNOW THE OWNER IS RESPONSIBLE?

The standards set out in the Building Code are not only designed for your safety, but also to protect you from possible liability. While engineers and architects have a design and inspection responsibility for certain types of buildings, it is primarily the owner who must make sure that the building meets the requirements of the Code.

In fact, refusing or neglecting to do what the Code requires can make a person liable for damages. Imagine what could happen if your own home burned because it did not meet safety standards. So remember that the Code is for everyone's protection, including YOURS.

If you are planning to build or renovate, we are here to help you make your buildings safe. Whether you are a designer, builder or owner the Manitoba Building Code is a tool to help you by outlining minimum standards of safety.

Contact the Local Government District of Pinawa at 204-753-5100, or the Building/Plumbing Inspector at 204-753-8336 for information on the Code.