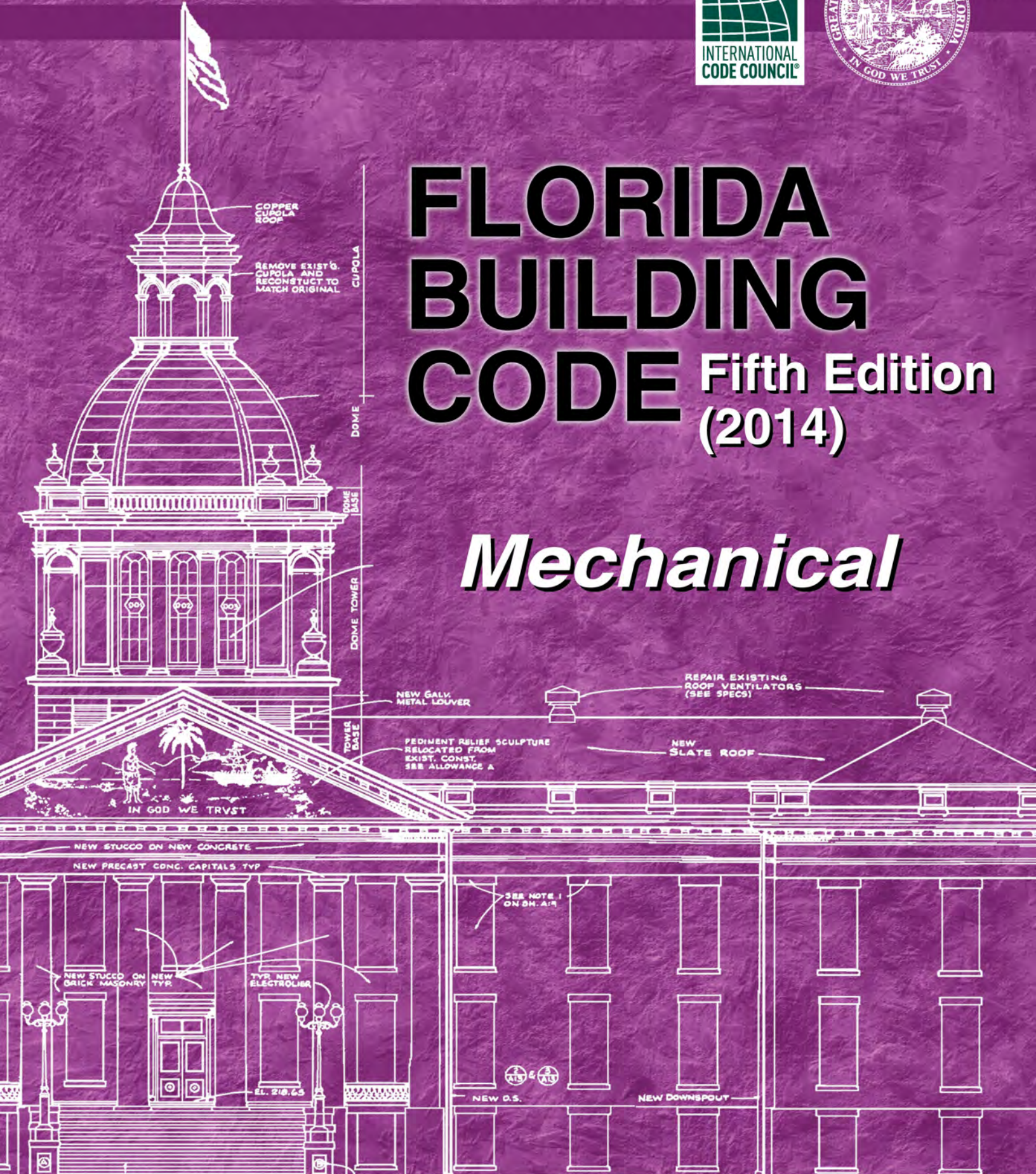




FLORIDA BUILDING CODE

Fifth Edition (2014)

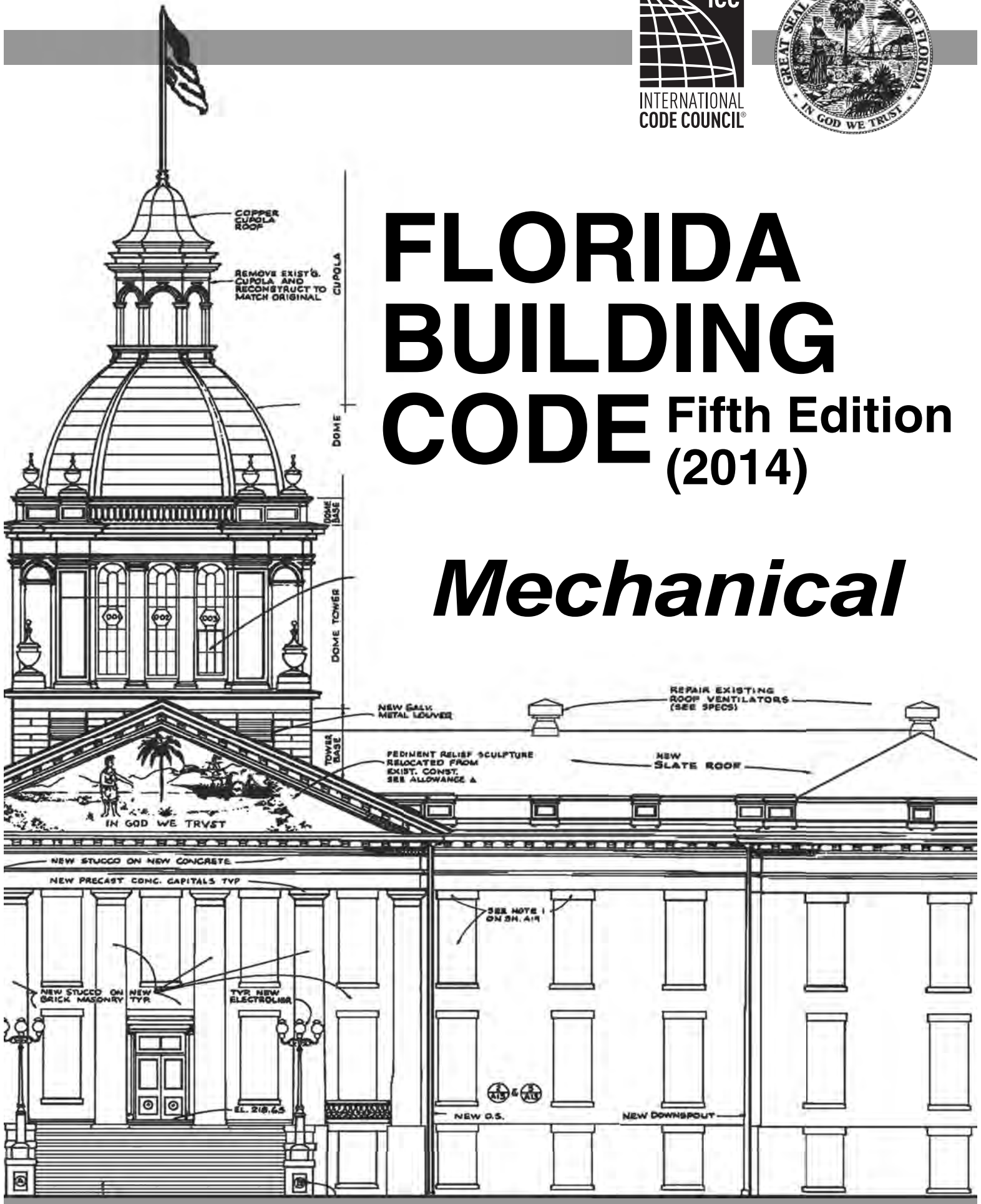
Mechanical



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PREFACE

History

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, led to a 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 of the building codes system failure were devastation to lives and economies and a statewide property insurance crisis. The response was a reform of the state building construction regulatory system that placed emphasis on uniformity and accountability.

The 1998 Florida Legislature amended Chapter 553, *Florida Statutes* (F.S.), *Building Construction Standards*, to create a single state building code that is enforced by local governments. As of March 1, 2002, the *Florida Building Code*, which is developed and maintained by the Florida Building Commission, supersedes all local building codes. The *Florida Building Code* is updated every three years and may be amended annually to incorporate interpretations and clarifications.

Scope

The *Florida Building Code* is based on national model building codes and national consensus standards which are amended where necessary for Florida’s specific needs. However, code requirements that address snow loads and earthquake protection are pervasive; they are left in place but should not be utilized or enforced because Florida has no snow load or earthquake threat. The code incorporates all building construction-related regulations for public and private buildings in the State of Florida other than those specifically exempted by Section 553.73, *Florida Statutes*. It has been harmonized with the *Florida Fire Prevention Code*, which is developed and maintained by the Department of Financial Services, Office of the State Fire Marshal, to establish unified and consistent standards.

The base codes for the Fifth edition (2014) of the *Florida Building Code* include: the *International Building Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Plumbing Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Mechanical Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Fuel Gas Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Residential Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Existing Building Code*®, 2012 edition; the *International Energy Conservation Code*®, 2012 edition; the *National Electrical Code*, 2011 edition; substantive criteria from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers’ (ASHRAE) Standard 90.1-2010. State and local codes adopted and incorporated into the code include the *Florida Building Code, Accessibility*, and special hurricane protection standards for the High-Velocity Hurricane Zone.

The code is composed of nine main volumes: the *Florida Building Code, Building*, which also includes state regulations for licensed facilities; the *Florida Building Code, Plumbing*; the *Florida Building Code, Mechanical*; the *Florida Building Code, Fuel Gas*; the *Florida Building Code, Existing Building*; the *Florida Building Code, Residential*; the *Florida Building Code, Energy Conservation*; the *Florida Building Code, Accessibility* and the *Florida Building Code, Test Protocols for High-Velocity Hurricane Zones*. Chapter 27 of the *Florida Building Code, Building*, adopts the *National Electrical Code*, NFPA 70, by reference.

Under certain strictly defined conditions, local governments may amend requirements to be more stringent than the code. All local amendments to the *Florida Building Code* must be adopted by local ordinance and reported to the Florida Building Commission then posted on www.florida-building.org in Legislative format for a month before being enforced. Local amendments to the *Florida Building Code* and the *Florida Fire Prevention Code* may be obtained from the Florida Building Commission web site, or from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation or the Florida Department of Financial Services, Office of the State Fire Marshal, respectively.

Adoption and Maintenance

The *Florida Building Code* is adopted and updated with new editions triennially by the Florida Building Commission. It is amended annually to incorporate interpretations, clarifications and to update standards. Minimum requirements for permitting, plans review and inspections are established by the code, and local jurisdictions may adopt additional administrative requirements that are more stringent. Local technical amendments are subject to strict criteria established by Section 553.73, F.S. They are subject to Commission review and adoption into the code or repeal when the code is updated triennially and are subject to appeal to the Commission according to the procedures established by Section 553.73, F.S.

Eleven Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), which are constituted consistent with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Guidelines, review proposed code changes and clarifications of the code and make recommendations to the Commission. These TACs, whose membership is constituted consistent with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Guidelines, include: Accessibility; Joint Building Fire (a joint committee of the Commission and the State Fire Marshal); Building Structural; Code Administration/Enforcement; Electrical; Energy; Mechanical; Plumbing and Fuel Gas; Roofing; Swimming Pool; and Special Occupancy (state agency construction and facility licensing regulations).

The Commission may only issue official code clarifications using procedures of Chapter 120, *Florida Statutes*. To obtain such a clarification, a request for a Declaratory Statement (DEC) must be made to the Florida Building Commission in a manner that establishes a clear set of facts and circumstances and identifies the section of the code in question. Requests are analyzed by staff, reviewed by the appropriate Technical Advisory Committee, and sent to the Florida Building Commission for action. These interpretations establish precedents for situations having similar facts and circumstances and are typically incorporated into the code in the next code amendment cycle. Non-binding opinions are available from the Building Officials Association of Florida's web site (www.BOAF.net) and a Binding Opinion process is available online at www.floridabuilding.org.

Code Development Committee Responsibilities (Letter Designations in Front of Section Numbers)

In each code development cycle, proposed changes to this code are considered at the Code Development Hearing by the International Mechanical Code Development Committee. Proposed changes to a code section whose number begins with a letter in brackets are considered by a different code development committee. For instance, proposed changes to code sections which have the letter [B] in front (for example, [B] 309.1), are considered by one of the International Building Code development committees (IBC-General) at the Code Development Hearing.

The content of sections in this code which begin with a letter designation is maintained by another code development committee in accordance with the following:

- [A] = Administrative Code Development Committee;
- [B] = International Building Code Development Committee (IBC—Fire Safety, General, Means of Egress or Structural);
- [EC] = International Energy Conservation Code Development Committee;
- [F] = International Fire Code Development Committee; and
- [FG] = International Fuel Gas Code Development Committee.

Marginal Markings

Solid vertical lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a technical change from the requirements of the 2009 edition. Deletion indicators (➡) are provided in the margin where an entire section, paragraph, exception or table has been deleted or an item in a list of items or in a table has been deleted.

Dotted vertical lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a change from the requirements of the base codes to the *Florida Building Code, Mechanical*, 5th Edition (2014) effective June 30, 2015.

Sections deleted from the base code are designated “Reserved” in order to maintain the structure of the base code.

Italicized Terms

Selected terms set forth in Chapter 2, Definitions, are italicized where they appear in code text. Such terms are not italicized where the definition set forth in Chapter 2 does not impart the intended meaning in the use of the term. The terms selected have definitions which the user should read carefully to facilitate better understanding of the code.

Acknowledgments

The *Florida Building Code* is produced through the efforts and contributions of building designers, contractors, product manufacturers, regulators and other interested parties who participate in the Florida Building Commission’s consensus processes, Commission staff and the participants in the national model code development processes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION .. 1.1</p> <p>PART 1—SCOPE AND APPLICATION..... 1.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>101 General 1.1</p> <p>102 Applicability..... 1.1</p> <p>PART 2—ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT..... 1.1</p> <p>103 Department of Mechanical Inspection (Reserved)..... 1.1</p> <p>104 Duties and Powers of the Code Official (Reserved) 1.1</p> <p>105 Approval (Reserved) 1.1</p> <p>106 Permits (Reserved)..... 1.1</p> <p>107 Inspections and Testing (Reserved) 1.1</p> <p>108 Violations (Reserved)..... 1.1</p> <p>109 Means of Appeal (Reserved) 1.1</p> <p>110 Temporary Equipment, Systems and Uses (Reserved)..... 1.1</p> <p>CHAPTER 2 DEFINITIONS 2.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>201 General 2.1</p> <p>202 General Definitions 2.1</p> <p>CHAPTER 3 GENERAL REGULATIONS 3.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>301 General 3.1</p> <p>302 Protection of Structure 3.2</p> <p>303 Equipment and Appliance Location..... 3.3</p> <p>304 Installation 3.3</p> <p>305 Piping Support 3.5</p> <p>306 Access and Service Space 3.5</p> <p>307 Condensate Disposal 3.7</p> <p>308 Clearance Reduction..... 3.8</p> <p>309 Temperature Control 3.8</p> <p>310 Explosion Control..... 3.9</p> <p>311 Smoke and Heat Vents 3.9</p> <p>312 Heating and Cooling Load Calculations 3.9</p>	<p>CHAPTER 4 VENTILATION4.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>401 General..... 4.1</p> <p>402 Natural Ventilation..... 4.1</p> <p>403 Mechanical Ventilation 4.2</p> <p>404 Enclosed Parking Garages 4.7</p> <p>405 Systems Control 4.7</p> <p>406 Ventilation of Uninhabited Spaces 4.8</p> <p>CHAPTER 5 EXHAUST SYSTEMS.....5.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>501 General..... 5.1</p> <p>502 Required Systems..... 5.2</p> <p>503 Motors and Fans..... 5.8</p> <p>504 Clothes Dryer Exhaust 5.8</p> <p>505 Domestic Kitchen Exhaust Equipment 5.10</p> <p>506 Commercial Kitchen Hood Ventilation System Ducts and Exhaust Equipment 5.10</p> <p>507 Commercial Kitchen Hoods..... 5.15</p> <p>508 Commercial Kitchen Makeup Air 5.18</p> <p>509 Fire Suppression Systems 5.18</p> <p>510 Hazardous Exhaust Systems 5.18</p> <p>511 Dust, Stock and Refuse Conveying Systems 5.20</p> <p>512 Subslab Soil Exhaust Systems 5.21</p> <p>513 Smoke Control Systems..... 5.21</p> <p>514 Energy Recovery Ventilation Systems 5.25</p> <p>515 Mausoleum Relief Vent..... 5.25</p> <p>516 Carbon Monoxide Control Systems..... 5.26</p> <p>CHAPTER 6 DUCT SYSTEMS.....6.1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>601 General..... 6.1</p> <p>602 Plenums 6.2</p> <p>603 Duct Construction and Installation 6.3</p> <p>604 Insulation 6.5</p> <p>605 Air Filters..... 6.6</p> <p>606 Smoke Detection Systems Control 6.6</p> <p>607 Duct and Transfer Openings 6.7</p>
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7 COMBUSTION AIR 7.1

Section

701 General 7.1

CHAPTER 8 CHIMNEYS AND VENTS..... 8.1

Section

801 General 8.1

802 Vents 8.2

803 Connectors 8.3

804 Direct-vent, Integral Vent and Mechanical
Draft Systems 8.4

805 Factory-built Chimneys 8.5

806 Metal Chimneys 8.6

**CHAPTER 9 SPECIFIC APPLIANCES,
FIREPLACES AND SOLID FUEL-
BURNING EQUIPMENT 9.1**

Section

901 General 9.1

902 Masonry Fireplaces 9.1

903 Factory-built Fireplaces 9.1

904 Pellet Fuel-burning Appliances 9.1

905 Fireplace Stoves and Room Heaters 9.1

906 Factory-built Barbecue Appliances 9.1

907 Incinerators and Crematories 9.1

908 Cooling Towers, Evaporative
Condensers and Fluid Coolers 9.1

909 Vented Wall Furnaces 9.2

910 Floor Furnaces 9.2

911 Duct Furnaces 9.2

912 Infrared Radiant Heaters 9.2

913 Clothes Dryers 9.2

914 Sauna Heaters 9.3

915 Engine and Gas Turbine-powered
Equipment and Appliances 9.3

916 Pool and Spa Heaters 9.3

917 Cooking Appliances 9.3

918 Forced-air Warm-air Furnaces 9.4

919 Conversion Burners 9.5

920 Unit Heaters 9.5

921 Vented Room Heaters 9.5

922 Kerosene and Oil-fired Stoves 9.5

923 Small Ceramic Kilns 9.5

924 Stationary Fuel Cell Power Systems 9.5

925 Masonry Heaters 9.5

926 Gaseous Hydrogen Systems 9.5

927 Radiant Heating Systems 9.5

928 Evaporative Cooling Equipment 9.6

**CHAPTER 10 BOILERS, WATER HEATERS
AND PRESSURE VESSELS.....10.1**

Section

1001 General 10.1

1002 Water Heaters 10.1

1003 Pressure Vessels 10.1

1004 Boilers 10.1

1005 Boiler Connections 10.2

1006 Safety and Pressure Relief Valves
and Controls 10.2

1007 Boiler Low-water Cutoff 10.3

1008 Steam Blowoff Valve 10.3

1009 Hot Water Boiler Expansion Tank 10.3

1010 Gauges 10.3

1011 Tests 10.3

CHAPTER 11 REFRIGERATION11.1

Section

1101 General 11.1

1102 System Requirements 11.1

1103 Refrigeration System Classification 11.2

1104 System Application Requirements 11.7

1105 Machinery Room, General Requirements 11.8

1106 Machinery Room, Special Requirements 11.9

1107 Refrigerant Piping 11.9

1108 Field Test 11.11

1109 Periodic Testing 11.11

CHAPTER 12 HYDRONIC PIPING.....12.1

Section

1201 General 12.1

1202 Material 12.1

1203 Joints and Connections 12.2

1204 Pipe Insulation 12.4

1205 Valves 12.4

1206 Piping Installation 12.4

1207 Transfer Fluid 12.5

1208 Tests 12.5

1209 Embedded Piping 12.5

**CHAPTER 13 FUEL OIL PIPING
AND STORAGE 13.1**

Section

1301 General 13.1

1302 Material 13.1

1303 Joints and Connections 13.1

1304 Piping Support 13.2

1305 Fuel Oil System Installation 13.2

1306 Oil Gauging 13.3

1307 Fuel Oil Valves 13.3

1308 Testing 13.3

CHAPTER 14 SOLAR SYSTEMS 14.1

Section

1401 General 14.1

1402 Installation 14.1

1403 Heat Transfer Fluids 14.2

1404 Materials 14.2

CHAPTER 15 REFERENCED STANDARDS 15.1

**APPENDIX A CHIMNEY CONNECTOR
PASS-THROUGHS A.1**

**APPENDIX B RECOMMENDED PERMIT
FEE SCHEDULE B.1**

INDEX INDEX.1