

Dallas Existing Building Code

I. INTRODUCTION: USING THE DALLAS EXISTING BUILDING CODE

(unless noted otherwise, all code sections refer to the Existing Building Code)

A. This is a guide to the use of the Dallas Existing Building Code, hereafter referred to as the DEBC. It should not be interpreted as containing substantive requirements and it is not intended to be cited for enforcement purposes.

B. The provisions of the other Construction Codes (building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, one-and two-family dwelling, and fuel gas) do not apply to work in existing buildings or changing the use of an existing building or to work in an existing building related to an addition unless the provisions of this code specifically reference them and make them applicable.

C. New Construction Building Code versus Existing Building Code.

In order to be considered an existing building, a structure must have been previously occupied or used for its intended purpose. In addition to this, a building or structure erected prior to the date of adoption of the current Dallas Building Code must have been completed for a period of not less than one year. Otherwise, the building will be governed by the Dallas Building Code.

D. Traditionally, the Dallas Construction Codes have made the requirements which are applicable to new buildings also apply to buildings whose use is changed; applicable to buildings undergoing rehabilitation with the extent of the requirements depending on the amount of money being spent on the building; and to some extent applicable to existing buildings which have an addition constructed. Buildings whose use was changed and buildings receiving rehabilitation costing more than 50 percent of the replacement cost of the building were required to comply with all the provisions of the Dallas Building Code for new buildings.

E. This code takes a new approach. The requirements that apply to a project are based upon the type of work being done rather than on the extent of the work. There is only one exception to this rule. In the case of reconstruction work, as the term reconstruction is defined in this code, there are some requirements which must be met when the project is a large one in floor area.

F. In this code, work is classified into six categories. Each category has a separate section that describes the requirements for that category of work. The categories are repair, renovation, alteration, reconstruction, change of use and additions. These terms are defined in Section 202 of this code. The definitions are critical to understand the distinctions between these six categories of work. Where a project contains more than one category of work, each applicable category must be consulted for the requirements for that category of work.

II. REPAIR WORK

A. The requirements that apply to repair work are in Chapter 4 of this code. The requirements for repairs are brief due to the limited nature of the work. Sections 408 (electrical), 409 (mechanical), and 410 (plumbing) include a short list of materials that may not be used for repair work due to their inherently hazardous nature and other list of materials that must be used in connection with repair work where applicable. These lists should be used when planning the repair components of any project.

B. This code does not establish when a permit is required for a project. Those requirements are in Subchapter III of Chapter 52 of the Dallas City Code, the "Administrative Procedures for the Construction Codes." It is important to understand that any repair work undertaken in connection with a project that involves other categories of work is required to meet only the provisions for the repair category established by this code. There is no limit to the amount of repair work that may be undertaken. The decision to renovate rather than repair is made only by the owner.

III.RENOVATION WORK

A. The requirements that apply to renovation work are in Chapter 5 of this code. Renovation is defined in Section 202 of this code.

B. There are short lists of materials that may not be used and materials or practices that must be used, where applicable, when renovation work is undertaken. The section 408, 409, and 410 lists should be used when planning a project that involves renovation work. Section 501.4 of this code references these lists.

C. The installation of smoke detectors is required in any building of Use Groups R3/R-4 that undergoes a renovation via Section 501.2 of the DEBC.

D. Renovation work must comply with Section 503, Materials and Methods. All materials used for the renovation work must meet the standards for those materials established by Section 503 and methods of installation must comply with Section 503. Section 503, Materials and Methods, references and makes applicable to renovation work certain specified sections of the other codes of the Construction Codes. Only those subsections specifically referenced in Section 503 apply to renovation work. All materials and methods used in renovation work must comply with the requirements of these sections.

E. This code never requires renovation. Any existing work may be repaired. The requirements for renovation apply only where the owner decides to renovate.

IV.ALTERATION WORK

A. The requirements that apply to alteration work are in Chapter 6 of the DEBC. Alteration is defined in Section 202 of this code.

B. Section 601.2, compliance, references the chapter 4 lists of materials that may not be used and materials or practices that must be used, where applicable, when alteration work is undertaken. These lists should be used when planning a project which includes alteration work.

C. The installation of smoke detectors is required in any building of Use Group R-3/ R-4 that undergoes an alteration.

D. Alteration work must also comply with Materials and Methods that are set forth in Section 503.

E. In alteration work, the configuration of the building is changed in some manner. The definition of "alteration" in Section 202 of this code provides the information needed to fully understand this term.

F. Care should be taken to ensure that the alteration will not create a non-conformity that did not exist before the alteration was undertaken.

G. Certain alterations create what are considered to be new building elements. These elements are required to conform to the applicable sections of the other Construction Codes. Examples of new building elements include: the installation

of a floor system which did not previously exist versus the live load requirements, the number of stories in a building is increased without increasing the height of the building versus the story requirements, newly created floor openings, newly created atriums, newly created door openings, newly created door openings, newly created openings in fire resistive assemblies, newly created openings in exterior walls, etc.

H. Improvements to the accessibility of buildings may be required when alteration work is undertaken. Those requirements are referenced in Sections 606.1 of the DEBC.

IV.RECONSTRUCTION WORK

A. The requirements that apply to reconstruction work are in Chapter 7 of this code. Reconstruction is defined in Section 202 of this code. Unlike repair, renovation, and alteration, reconstruction is not a kind of work. A reconstruction may, as the definition of the term makes clear, include a combination of repair, renovation, and alteration work. It is the extent and nature of the work that makes a project a reconstruction. There are no quantitative criteria that determine whether a project is a reconstruction. A project becomes a reconstruction when the area where the project is taking place cannot be occupied while the work is in progress and when a new certificate of occupancy is required before the area can be reoccupied. Both criteria must be met.

B. The code requires that a reconstruction project have a delineated work area. This area is established by the permit applicant. The term "work area" is defined in Section 202 of the code. A reconstruction project must always involve an entire use, primary function space, or tenancy as those three terms are defined in Section 202. Projects that do not involve an entire use, primary function space, or tenancy are not reconstruction projects.

C. In a manner similar to the other types of project in this code, a reconstruction project is comprised of repair, renovation and alteration work and is to comply with all of the requirements found in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. The entire work area must conform to these basic requirements. These chapters must be carefully reviewed when a reconstruction project is being planned.

D. In addition to meeting the basic requirements, certain reconstruction projects must meet the Supplemental Requirements found in chapter 7. The Supplemental Requirements apply only when the work area for a reconstruction project exceeds a certain size. Each Supplemental Requirement has its own threshold of applicability.

E. The owner of a building in which a reconstruction project is planned must review the Supplemental Requirements applicable to the use of the project to determine if any of those requirements applies to the project.

V.APPLYING THE CODE TO A PROJECT: The requirements of this code applicable to a project can be found as follows:

A. Classify the project: Separate the project into its component parts of repair, renovation, and alteration.

B. Where a portion of the work is repair: consult the repair section of the code (Chapter 4) to ensure that prohibited materials are not being used and that any applicable required materials or practices are being used.

C. Where a portion of the work is renovation:

1. Consult the renovation sections of the DEBC (Chapter 5);
2. Ensure that the renovation work does not use any prohibited materials and that any applicable required materials or practices are being used; and
3. Ensure that renovation materials and the methods of their installation conform to the Materials and Methods section of this code (Section 503).

D. Where a portion of the work is alteration work:

1. Consult the alteration section of this code (Chapter 6);
2. Ensure that the alteration work does not use any prohibited materials and that any applicable required materials or practices are being used(Section 601.2);
3. Ensure that any materials and methods used for the alterations conform to the requirements of the Materials and Methods section of this code (Section 503);
4. Ensure that alteration which creates a new building element conforms to the requirements for new building elements; and
5. Ensure that none of the alteration work creates a new condition that would create a violation.

E. When the project is a reconstruction project according to the definitions in Section 202 of this code:

1. Establish the work area of the project and show it on the plans and/or permit application;
2. Ensure that the requirements applicable to the repair, renovation, and alteration portions of the project are followed;
3. Review the size of the work area against the relevant provisions of the Supplemental Requirements in Sections 703 through 705 of the DEBC. Where compliance with a supplemental requirement is necessary, then ensure that the plans and/or the permit application reflect compliance with the required section. Some Supplemental Requirements will require work outside the work area.

F. Changes of Use: The Dallas Building Code divides all buildings into categories called uses. The DEBC uses these same classifications.

1. The different uses represent different hazards and different needs. Specific requirements apply to each use. Each of the other technical codes of the Construction Codes: Building, Fire, Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical, defines these uses, each for its own purpose. Traditionally, the Construction Codes required any building or portion of a building where the use was changed to conform to the requirements of the code for a new building of that use. This code takes a different approach.
2. A change of use in a building often, but not always, involves some construction work. Changes of use, in which the owner does not need any construction work to effect the new use, do happen. The different uses defined by the code reflect different levels of hazard and different safety requirements. Depending upon the specific change, a new use may not affect the hazard; it could pose a lesser hazard; or it might pose a greater hazard or necessitate additional safety measures.

3. This code allows changes of use where the new use is similar to or less demanding in terms of hazard or safety requirements than the present use. Few, if any, modifications to the building are required by this code where such a change of use is planned.

4. The DEBC uses the concept of Hazard Indexes in order to specify the requirements for a change of use. Separate hazard indexes are established for different aspects of building, health, and safety:

- a. General occupancy: Changes of use specified in Section 812.2.2 must comply with the requirements set forth in Chapter 7 of the DEBC before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- b. Means of Egress: Certain changes of use specified in Section 812.2.2 must comply with additional requirements for egress which are set forth in Section 812.4 before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- c. Vertical Openings: Stairways and other vertical openings located in a building or portion of a building where there is a change of use are required to meet certain enclosure requirements for the new use which are specified in Sections 812.4.4 of the DEBC. These requirements must be met before the building may be occupied for the new use.
- d. Height and Area Limits: Changes of use are not allowed if the building will exceed the height and area limits specified in Section 812.4.2 for its type of construction. The types of construction are defined in the Dallas building code.
- e. Exterior Walls: Changes of use as specified in Table 812.4.3 of this code must have the fire resistance of exterior walls and any openings therein improved as specified in Section 812.4.3 before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- f. Fire Suppression: Changes of use as specified in Table 812.7.1 must have a fire suppression system installed in accordance with the requirements of Section 812.7 before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- g. Fire Alarms and Fire Detection Systems: Uses must have fire alarms or fire detection installed in accordance with the requirements of the Dallas Fire Code before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- h. Structural, Electrical, Mechanical, and Plumbing:** Some changes of use may necessitate changes to the structural, plumbing, electrical, or mechanical systems of a building. These requirements are set forth in Sections 807, 808, 809, and 810 of the DEBC. Only those requirements necessitated by the change and needed for health or safety in the new use as specified must be met.
- i. Accessibility Requirements:** Changes of use must conform to the accessibility requirements specified in Section 806.1 before the building can be occupied for the new use.
- j. Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements:** Where the use of a building or portion of a building is changed to the institutional and residential uses listed in Section 812.9, carbon monoxide alarms must be installed in accordance with this section.

G. Other Work: Where the owner of a building undergoing a change of use decides to undertake work not required by Chapter 8 of the DEBC, then that work must comply with the requirements for repair, renovation, alteration, and reconstruction, as the case may be, which are established by Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the DEBC.

H. Certificates of Occupancy: Where the use of a building or portion of a building is changed, a new certificate of occupancy is required for the new use by the provisions of Section 306(a) of Chapter 52, the “Administrative Procedures for the Construction Code.” All changes of use are not required to meet the requirements for Reconstruction. Only a project that meets the definition of Reconstruction set forth in Section 202 need comply with the provisions of Section 305, Reconstruction, of this code.

I. Additions:

1. Additions without separation – The extent to which the area and/or height of the existing building is to be increased will be governed by the DEBC. Additions that exceed the limits allowed by the DEBC must use the Dallas building code to address the entire building height and/or area or treat the addition as a separate building. The addition itself is required to comply with the provision of the other technical codes of the Construction Codes. Work in the existing building, which is related to the addition, must conform to the requirements of Chapter 9 of the DEBC. Additionally, such work undertaken in the existing building must comply with the requirements for repair, renovation, alteration, and reconstruction as set forth in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the DEBC.
2. Additions with separation – The addition and the fire wall common between the existing building and the addition are governed by the Dallas building code.

J. Historical Buildings: Chapter 10 of the DEBC defines those buildings that are to be treated as historic and sets forth certain special requirements applicable to historic buildings, which modify the provisions of the DEBC when a building is historic. Chapter 10 should be reviewed to determine if a building is to be treated as historic under the code and for the special provisions applicable to the various types of historical buildings.

K. Moved Buildings (historic). Refer to Chapter 10 of the DEBC.

L. Moved Buildings (non-historic). Refer to Chapter 11 of the DEBC.

M. Fire Damaged Buildings. Refer to Section 310 of the DEBC.

VI. APPLYING THE CODE TO SINGLE-FAMILY OR DUPLEX PROJECTS: Similar requirements applicable to a single-family or duplex project are located in Appendix J of the Dallas One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code.