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2012 International Mechanical Code®

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PREFACE

Introduction

Internationally, code officials recognize the need for a modern, up-to-date mechanical code addressing the design and installation of mechanical systems through requirements emphasizing performance. The *International Mechanical Code*[®], in this 2012 edition, is designed to meet these needs through model code regulations that safeguard the public health and safety in all communities, large and small.

This comprehensive mechanical code establishes minimum regulations for mechanical systems using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new mechanical designs. This 2012 edition is fully compatible with all of the *International Codes* (I-Codes)[®] published by the International Code Council (ICC), including the *International Building Code*[®], *International Energy Conservation Code*[®], *International Existing Building Code*[®], *International Fire Code*[®], *International Fuel Gas Code*[®], *International Green Construction Code*[™] (to be available March 2012), *International Plumbing Code*[®], *ICC Performance Code*[®], *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*[®], *International Property Maintenance Code*[®], *International Residential Code*[®], *International Swimming Pool and Spa Code*[™] (to be available March 2012), *International Urban-Wildland Interface Code*[®] and *International Zoning Code*[®].

The *International Mechanical Code* provisions provide many benefits, among which is the model code development process that offers an international forum for mechanical professionals to discuss performance and prescriptive code requirements. This forum provides an excellent arena to debate proposed revisions. This model code also encourages international consistency in the application of provisions.

Development

The first edition of the *International Mechanical Code* (1996) was the culmination of an effort initiated in 1994 by a development committee appointed by the ICC and consisting of representatives of the three statutory members of the International Code Council at that time, including: Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). The intent was to draft a comprehensive set of regulations for mechanical systems consistent with and inclusive of the scope of the existing model codes. Technical content of the latest model codes promulgated by BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI was utilized as the basis for the development. This 2012 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes approved through the ICC Code Development Process through 2010. A new edition such as this is promulgated every 3 years.

This code is founded on principles intended to establish provisions consistent with the scope of a mechanical code that adequately protects public health, safety and welfare; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; provisions that do not restrict the use of new materials, products or methods of construction; and provisions that do not give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, products or methods of construction.

Adoption

The *International Mechanical Code* is available for adoption and use by jurisdictions internationally. Its use within a governmental jurisdiction is intended to be accomplished through adoption by reference in accordance with proceedings establishing the jurisdiction's laws. At the time of adoption, jurisdictions should insert the appropriate information in provisions requiring specific local information, such as the name of the adopting jurisdiction. These locations are shown in bracketed words in small capital letters in the code and in the sample ordinance. The sample adoption ordinance on page xi addresses several key elements of a code adoption ordinance, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

Maintenance

The *International Mechanical Code* is kept up to date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code enforcing officials, industry representatives, design professionals and other interested parties. Proposed changes are carefully considered through an open code development process in which all interested and affected parties may participate.

The contents of this work are subject to change both through the Code Development Cycles and the governmental body that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Codes and Standards Development Department of the International Code Council.

While the development procedure of the *International Mechanical Code* assures the highest degree of care, ICC and ICC's members and those participating in the development of this code do not accept any liability resulting from compliance or noncompliance with the provisions because ICC and its members do not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code. Only the governmental body that enacts the code into law has such authority.

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.

Note that, for the development of the 2015 edition of the I-Codes, there will be two groups of code development committees and they will meet in separate years. The groupings are as follows:

Group A Codes (Heard in 2012, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 3, 2012)	Group B Codes (Heard in 2013, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 3, 2013)
International Building Code	Administrative Provisions (Chapter 1 all codes except IRC and ICC PC, administrative updates to currently referenced standards, and designated definitions)
International Fuel Gas Code	International Energy Conservation Code
International Mechanical Code	International Existing Building Code
International Plumbing Code	International Fire Code
International Private Sewage Disposal Code	International Green Construction Code
	ICC Performance Code
	International Property Maintenance Code
	International Residential Code
	International Swimming Pool and Spa Code
	International Wildland-Urban Interface Code
	International Zoning Code

Code change proposals submitted for code sections that have a letter designation in front of them will be heard by the respective committee responsible for such code sections. Because different committees will meet in different years, it is possible that some proposals for this code will be heard by a committee in a different year than the year in which the primary committee for this code meets.

For example, every section of Chapter 1 of this code is designated as the responsibility of the Administrative Code Development Committee, and that committee is part of the Group B code hearings. This committee will conduct its code development hearings in 2013 to consider all code change proposals for Chapter 1 of this code and proposals for Chapter 1 of all I-Codes. Therefore, any proposals received for Chapter 1 of this code will be deferred for consideration in 2013 by the Administrative Code Development Committee.

Another example is Section 606.4 of this code which is designated as the responsibility of the International Fire Code Development Committee. This committee will conduct its code development hearings in 2013 to consider code change proposals in its purview, which includes any proposals to Section 606.4.

In some cases, another committee in Group A will be responsible for a section of this code. For example, Section 607.3 has a [B] in front of the numbered section, indicating that this section of the code is the responsibility of one of the International Building Code Development Committees. The International Building Code is in Group A; therefore, any code change proposals to this section will be due before the Group A deadline of January 3, 2012, and these code change proposals will be assigned to the appropriate International Building Code Development Committee for consideration.

It is very important that anyone submitting code change proposals understand which code development committee is responsible for the section of the code that is the subject of the code change proposal. For further information on the code development committee responsibilities, please visit the ICC web site at www.iccsafe.org/scoping.

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.

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.

Effective Use of the International Mechanical Code

The *International Mechanical Code*[®] (IMC[®]) is a model code that regulates the design and installation of mechanical systems, appliances, appliance venting, duct and ventilation systems, combustion air provisions, hydronic systems and solar systems. The purpose of the code is to establish the minimum acceptable level of safety and to protect life and property from the potential dangers associated with the installation and operation of mechanical systems. The code also protects the personnel that install, maintain, service and replace the systems and appliances addressed by this code.

The IMC is primarily a prescriptive code with some performance text. The code relies heavily on product specifications and listings to provide much of the appliance and equipment installation requirements. The general Section 105.2 and the exception to Section 403.2 allow designs and installations to be performed by approved engineering methods as alternatives to the prescriptive methods in the code.

The format of the IMC allows each chapter to be devoted to a particular subject with the exception of Chapter 3, which contains general subject matters that are not extensive enough to warrant their own independent chapter.

Chapter 1 Scope and Administration. Chapter 1 establishes the limits of applicability of the code and describes how the code is to be applied and enforced. A mechanical code, like any other code, is intended to be adopted as a legally enforceable document and it cannot be effective without adequate provisions for its administration and enforcement. The provisions of Chapter 1 establish the authority and duties of the code official appointed by the jurisdiction having authority and also establish the rights and privileges of the design professional, contractor and property owner.

Chapter 2 Definitions. Chapter 2 is the repository of the definitions of terms used in the body of the code. Codes are technical documents and every word and term can impact the meaning of the code text and the intended results. The code often uses terms that have a unique meaning in the code and the code meaning can differ substantially from the ordinarily understood meaning of the term as used outside of the code.

The terms defined in Chapter 2 are deemed to be of prime importance in establishing the meaning and intent of the code text that uses the terms. The user of the code should be familiar with and consult this chapter because the definitions are essential to the correct interpretation of the code and because the user may not be aware that a term is defined.

Chapter 3 General Regulations. Chapter 3 contains broadly applicable requirements related to appliance location and installation, appliance and systems access, protection of structural elements, condensate disposal and clearances to combustibles, among others.

Chapter 4 Ventilation. Chapter 4 includes means for protecting building occupant health by controlling the quality of indoor air and protecting property from the effects of inadequate ventilation. In some cases, ventilation is required to prevent or reduce a health hazard by removing contaminants at their source.

Ventilation is both necessary and desirable for the control of air contaminants, moisture and temperature. Habitable and occupiable spaces are ventilated to promote a healthy and comfortable environment for the occupants. Uninhabited and unoccupied spaces are ventilated to protect the building structure from the harmful effects of excessive humidity and heat. Ventilation of specific occupancies is necessary to minimize the potential for toxic or otherwise harmful substances to reach dangerously high concentrations in air.

Chapter 5 Exhaust Systems. Chapter 5 provides guidelines for reasonable protection of life, property and health from the hazards associated with exhaust systems, air contaminants and smoke development in the event of a fire. In most cases, these hazards involve materials and gases that are flammable, explosive, toxic or otherwise hazardous. Where contaminants are known to be present in quantities that are irritating or harmful to the occupants' health or are hazardous in a fire, both naturally and mechanically ventilated spaces must be equipped with mechanical exhaust systems capable of collecting and removing the contaminants.

This chapter contains requirements for the installation of exhaust systems, with an emphasis on the structural integrity of the systems and equipment involved and the overall impact of the systems on the fire safety performance of the building. It includes requirements for the exhaust of commercial kitchen grease- and smoke-laden air, hazardous fumes and toxic gases, clothes dryer moisture and heat and dust, stock and refuse materials.

Chapter 6 Duct Systems. Chapter 6 of the code regulates the materials and methods used for constructing and installing ducts, plenums, system controls, exhaust systems, fire protection systems and related components that affect the overall performance of a building's air distribution system and the reasonable protection of life and property from the hazards associated with air-moving equipment and systems. This chapter contains requirements for the installation of supply, return and exhaust air systems. Specific exhaust systems are also addressed in Chapter 5. Information on the design of duct systems is limited to that in Section 603.2. The code is very much concerned with the structural integrity of the systems and the overall impact of the systems on the fire safety and life safety performance of the building. Design considerations such as duct sizing, maximum efficiency, cost effectiveness, occupant comfort and convenience are the responsibility of the design professional. The provisions for the protection of duct penetrations of wall, floor, ceiling and roof assemblies are extracted from the *International Building Code*.

Chapter 7 Combustion Air. Complete combustion of solid and liquid fuel is essential for the proper operation of appliances, for control of harmful emissions and for achieving maximum fuel efficiency.

The specific combustion air requirements provided in previous editions of the code have been deleted in favor of a single section that directs the user to NFPA 31 for oil-fired appliance combustion air requirements and the manufacturer's installation instructions for solid-fuel burning appliances. For gas-fired appliances, the provisions of the *International Fuel Gas Code* are applicable.

Chapter 8 Chimneys and Vents. Chapter 8 is intended to regulate the design, construction, installation, maintenance, repair and approval of chimneys, vents and their connections to solid and liquid fuel-burning appliances. The requirements of this chapter are intended to achieve the complete removal of the products of combustion from fuel-burning appliances and equipment. This chapter includes regulations for the proper selection, design, construction and installation of a chimney or vent, along with appropriate measures to minimize the related potential fire hazards. A chimney or vent must be designed for the type of appliance or equipment it serves. Chimneys and vents are designed for specific applications depending on the flue gas temperatures and the type of fuel being burned in the appliance. Chimneys and vents for gas-fired appliances are covered in the *International Fuel Gas Code*.

Chapter 9 Specific Appliances, Fireplaces and Solid Fuel-burning Equipment. Chapter 9 sets minimum construction and performance criteria for fireplaces, appliances and equipment and provides for the safe installation of these items. It reflects the code's intent to specifically address all of the types of appliances that the code intends to regulate. Other regulations affecting the installation of solid fuel-burning fireplaces, appliances and accessory appliances are found in Chapters 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Chapter 10 Boilers, Water Heaters and Pressure Vessels. Chapter 10 presents regulations for the proper installation of boilers, water heaters and pressure vessels to protect life and property from the hazards associated with those appliances and vessels. It applies to all types of boilers and pressure vessels, regardless of size, heat input, operating pressure or operating temperature.

Because pressure vessels are closed containers designed to contain liquids, gases or both under pressure, they must be designed and installed to prevent structural failures that can result in extremely hazardous situations. Certain safety features are therefore provided in Chapter 10 to reduce the potential for explosion hazards.

Chapter 11 Refrigeration. Chapter 11 contains regulations pertaining to the life safety of building occupants. These regulations establish minimum requirements to achieve the proper design, construction, installation and operation of refrigeration systems. Refrigeration systems are a combination of interconnected components and piping assembled to form a closed circuit in which a refrigerant is circulated. The system's function is to extract heat from a location or medium, and to reject that heat to a different location or medium. This chapter establishes reasonable safeguards for the occupants by defining and mandating practices that are consistent with the practices and experience of the industry.

Chapter 12 Hydronic Piping. Hydronic piping includes piping, fittings and valves used in building space conditioning systems. Applications include hot water, chilled water, steam, steam condensate, brines and water/antifreeze mixtures. Chapter 12 contains the provisions that govern the construction, installation, alteration and repair of all hydronic piping systems that affect reliability, serviceability, energy efficiency and safety.

Chapter 13 Fuel Oil Piping and Storage. Chapter 13 regulates the design and installation of fuel oil storage and piping systems. The regulations include reference to construction standards for above-ground and underground storage tanks, material standards for piping systems (both above-ground and underground) and extensive requirements for the proper assembly of system piping and components. The *International Fire Code* (IFC) covers subjects not addressed in detail here. The provisions in this chapter are intended to prevent fires, leaks and spills involving fuel oil storage and piping systems.

Chapter 14 Solar Systems. Chapter 14 establishes provisions for the safe installation, operation and repair of solar energy systems used for space heating or cooling, domestic hot water heating or processing. Although such systems use components similar to those of conventional mechanical equipment, many of these provisions are unique to solar energy systems.

Chapter 15 Referenced Standards. Chapter 15 lists all of the product and installation standards and codes that are referenced throughout Chapters 1 through 14. As stated in Section 102.8, these standards and codes become an enforceable part of the code (to the prescribed extent of the reference) as if printed in the body of the code. Chapter 15 provides the full title and edition year of the standards and codes in addition to the address of the promulgators and the section numbers in which the standards and codes are referenced.

Appendix A Chimney Connector Pass-throughs. Appendix A provides figures that illustrate various requirements in the body of the code. Figure A-1 illustrates the chimney connector clearance requirements of Table 803.10.4.

Appendix B Recommended Permit Fee Schedule. Appendix B provides a sample permit fee schedule for mechanical permits. The local jurisdiction can adopt this appendix and fill in the dollar amounts in the blank spaces to establish their official permit fee schedule. The ICC does not establish permit fees because the code is adopted throughout the country and there are vast differences in operating budgets between different parts of the country, as well as between large and small municipalities within the same region.

LEGISLATION

The *International Codes* are designed and promulgated to be adopted by reference by legislative action. Jurisdictions wishing to adopt the 2012 *International Mechanical Code* as an enforceable regulation governing plumbing systems should ensure that certain factual information is included in the adopting legislation at the time adoption is being considered by the appropriate governmental body. The following sample adoption legislation addresses several key elements, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

SAMPLE LEGISLATION FOR ADOPTION OF THE *INTERNATIONAL MECHANICAL CODE* ORDINANCE NO. _____

A[N] [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] of the [JURISDICTION] adopting the 2012 edition of the *International Mechanical Code*, regulating and governing the design, construction, quality of materials, erection, installation, alteration, repair, location, relocation, replacement, addition to, use or maintenance of mechanical systems in the [JURISDICTION]; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; repealing [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] No. _____ of the [JURISDICTION] and all other ordinances or parts of laws in conflict therewith.

The [GOVERNING BODY] of the [JURISDICTION] does ordain as follows:

Section 1. That a certain document, three (3) copies of which are on file in the office of the [TITLE OF JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] of [NAME OF JURISDICTION], being marked and designated as the *International Mechanical Code*, 2012 edition, including Appendix Chapters [FILL IN THE APPENDIX CHAPTERS BEING ADOPTED], as published by the International Code Council, be and is hereby adopted as the Mechanical Code of the [JURISDICTION], in the State of [STATE NAME] regulating and governing the design, construction, quality of materials, erection, installation, alteration, repair, location, relocation, replacement, addition to, use or maintenance of mechanical systems as herein provided; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; and each and all of the regulations, provisions, penalties, conditions and terms of said Mechanical Code on file in the office of the [JURISDICTION] are hereby referred to, adopted, and made a part hereof, as if fully set out in this legislation, with the additions, insertions, deletions and changes, if any, prescribed in Section 2 of this ordinance.

Section 2. The following sections are hereby revised:

Section 101.1. Insert: [NAME OF JURISDICTION]

Section 106.5.2. Insert: [APPROPRIATE SCHEDULE]

Section 106.5.3. Insert: [PERCENTAGES IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section 108.4. Insert: [OFFENSE, DOLLAR AMOUNT, NUMBER OF DAYS]

Section 108.5. Insert: [DOLLAR AMOUNT IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section 3. That [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] No. _____ of [JURISDICTION] entitled [FILL IN HERE THE COMPLETE TITLE OF THE LEGISLATION OR LAWS IN EFFECT AT THE PRESENT TIME SO THAT THEY WILL BE REPEALED BY DEFINITE MENTION] and all other ordinances or parts of laws in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Section 4. That if any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this legislation is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The [GOVERNING BODY] hereby declares that it would have passed this law, and each section, subsection, clause or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses and phrases be declared unconstitutional.

Section 5. That nothing in this legislation or in the Mechanical Code hereby adopted shall be construed to affect any suit or proceeding impending in any court, or any rights acquired, or liability incurred, or any cause or causes of action acquired or existing, under any act or ordinance hereby repealed as cited in Section 2 of this law; nor shall any just or legal right or remedy of any character be lost, impaired or affected by this legislation.

Section 6. That the [JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] is hereby ordered and directed to cause this legislation to be published. (An additional provision may be required to direct the number of times the legislation is to be published and to specify that it is to be in a newspaper in general circulation. Posting may also be required.)

Section 7. That this law and the rules, regulations, provisions, requirements, orders and matters established and adopted hereby shall take effect and be in full force and effect [TIME PERIOD] from and after the date of its final passage and adoption.

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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION

PART 1—SCOPE AND APPLICATION

SECTION 101 GENERAL

[A] **101.1 Title.** These regulations shall be known as the *Mechanical Code* of [NAME OF JURISDICTION], hereinafter referred to as “this code.”

[A] **101.2 Scope.** This code shall regulate the design, installation, maintenance, *alteration* and inspection of mechanical systems that are permanently installed and utilized to provide control of environmental conditions and related processes within buildings. This code shall also regulate those mechanical systems, system components, *equipment* and appliances specifically addressed herein. The installation of fuel gas distribution piping and *equipment*, fuel gas-fired appliances and fuel gas-fired *appliance* venting systems shall be regulated by the *International Fuel Gas Code*.

Exception: Detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories high with separate means of egress and their accessory structures shall comply with the *International Residential Code*.

[A] **101.2.1 Appendices.** Provisions in the appendices shall not apply unless specifically adopted.

[A] **101.3 Intent.** The purpose of this code is to provide minimum standards to safeguard life or limb, health, property and public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, operation and maintenance or use of mechanical systems.

[A] **101.4 Severability.** If a section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this code is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this code.

SECTION 102 APPLICABILITY

[A] **102.1 General.** Where there is a conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement shall govern. Where, in a specific case, different sections of this code specify different materials, methods of construction or other requirements, the most restrictive shall govern.

[A] **102.2 Existing installations.** Except as otherwise provided for in this chapter, a provision in this code shall not require the removal, *alteration* or abandonment of, nor prevent the continued utilization and maintenance of, a mechanical system lawfully in existence at the time of the adoption of this code.

[A] **102.3 Maintenance.** Mechanical systems, both existing and new, and parts thereof shall be maintained in proper operating condition in accordance with the original design and in a safe and sanitary condition. Devices or safeguards which are required by this code shall be maintained in compliance with the code edition under which they were installed. The owner or the owner’s designated agent shall be responsible for maintenance of mechanical systems. To determine compliance with this provision, the code official shall have the authority to require a mechanical system to be reinspected. The inspection for maintenance of HVAC systems shall be done in accordance with ASHRAE/ACCA/ANSI Standard 180.

[A] **102.4 Additions, alterations or repairs.** Additions, alterations, renovations or repairs to a mechanical system shall conform to that required for a new mechanical system without requiring the existing mechanical system to comply with all of the requirements of this code. Additions, alterations or repairs shall not cause an existing mechanical system to become unsafe, hazardous or overloaded.

Minor additions, alterations, renovations and repairs to existing mechanical systems shall meet the provisions for new construction, unless such work is done in the same manner and arrangement as was in the existing system, is not hazardous and is *approved*.

[A] **102.5 Change in occupancy.** It shall be unlawful to make a change in the *occupancy* of any structure which will subject the structure to any special provision of this code applicable to the new *occupancy* without approval. The code official shall certify that such structure meets the intent of the provisions of law governing building construction for the proposed new *occupancy* and that such change of *occupancy* does not result in any hazard to the public health, safety or welfare.

[A] **102.6 Historic buildings.** The provisions of this code relating to the construction, *alteration*, repair, enlargement, restoration, relocation or moving of buildings or structures shall not be mandatory for existing buildings or structures identified and classified by the state or local jurisdiction as historic buildings when such buildings or structures are judged by the code official to be safe and in the public interest of health, safety and welfare regarding any proposed construction, *alteration*, repair, enlargement, restoration, relocation or moving of buildings.

[A] **102.7 Moved buildings.** Except as determined by Section 102.2, mechanical systems that are a part of buildings or structures moved into or within the jurisdiction shall comply with the provisions of this code for new installations.

[A] **102.8 Referenced codes and standards.** The codes and standards referenced herein shall be those that are listed in Chapter 15 and such codes and standards shall be considered