

## Building Codes – How Do They Help You?

1. The regulation of residential construction is not a recent phenomenon. It can be traced through recorded history for more than 4,000 years. Through time, people have become increasingly aware of their ability to avoid the ruinous consequences of building substandard homes and how it impacts the community at large.
2. Who needs Building Codes? We all do – whether in our homes, offices, schools, places of worship, stores, or places of entertainment. We rely on the safety and durability of structures that surround us in our everyday living. The public need for protection from disaster due to fire, natural hazards, and general deterioration underscores the need for the International Residential Code and its administration in every Texas community.
3. What is a Building Code? Practically, it is the government’s official statement on building safety. Technically, it is a compendium of minimum safety standards arranged in a systematic manner (codified) for easy reference. It embraces all aspects of building construction – fire, structural, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, fuel gas, energy, and more.
4. Public safety is not the only byproduct afforded by modern codes. Architects, engineers, contractors, and others in the building community can take advantage of the latest technological advances accommodated by these codes with viable savings to the consumer at time of purchase and preservation of the tax base that supports the many services deserved by tax payers.
5. Codes must be responsive to the government’s need to protect the public in the built environment. They must provide due process for all affected and keep pace with rapidly changing technology. Today codes are the central regulatory basis for the administration of programs in cities, counties, and states throughout the nation. They simply represent a collective undertaking which shares the cost of code development and maintenance while ensuring uniformity of regulations so the advantages of technology can be optimized.
6. Building safety code enforcement has historically been accomplished by defraying the costs of administration through a system of fees relating to a specific project – a system that is self-supporting. These fees are generally less than one-percent of the overall cost of the building project. Public protection is thus obtained in a cost-effective manner with the entire process, from plan review to field inspection, carried out in a professional manner. The system is so well developed the true complexity of the process is obscure to many.
7. Why should minimum safety codes apply to a person’s own house? For several reasons:
  - a. For personal safety, that of the family, and the guests invited into the home.
  - b. To ensure the economic well-being of the community by reducing potential spread of fire and disease.
  - c. For the conservation of energy.
  - d. To protect future home purchasers who deserve reasonable assurance the home they buy will be safe and durable.