

UNIFORM STATEWIDE BUILDING CODE (amending 13 VAC 5-63-40 and 13 VAC 5-63-480)

13 VAC 5-63-40. Section 104 Enforcement, Generally.

A. Section 104.1 Scope of enforcement. This section establishes the requirements for enforcement of the USBC in accordance with Section 36-105 of the Code of Virginia. Enforcement of the provisions of the USBC for construction and rehabilitation shall be the responsibility of the local building department. Whenever a county or municipality does not have such a building department, the local governing body shall enter into an agreement with the local governing body of another county or municipality or with some other agency, or a state agency approved by DHCD for such enforcement. For the purposes of this section, towns with a population of less than 3,500 may elect to administer and enforce the USBC; however, where the town does not elect to administer and enforce the code, the county in which the town is situated shall administer and enforce the code for the town. In the event such town is situated in two or more counties, those counties shall administer and enforce the USBC for that portion of the town which is situated within their respective boundaries.

The local governing body shall inspect and enforce this code for elevators except for elevators in single and two-family homes and townhouses. Such inspection and enforcement shall be carried out by an agency or department designated by the local governing body.

Upon a finding by the local building department, following a complaint by a tenant of a residential rental unit that is the subject of such complaint, that there may be a violation

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of the unsafe structures provisions of the code, the local building department shall enforce such provisions. If the local building department receives a complaint that a violation of the USBC exists that is an immediate and imminent threat to the health or safety of the owner or tenant of a residential dwelling unit or a nearby residential dwelling unit, and the owner or tenant of the residential dwelling unit that is the subject of the complaint has refused to allow the local building official or his agent to have access to the subject dwelling, the local building official or his agent may present sworn testimony to a court of competent jurisdiction and request that the court grant the local building official or his agent an inspection warrant to enable the building official or his agent to enter the subject dwelling for the purpose of determining whether violations of the USBC exist. The local building official or his agent shall make a reasonable effort to obtain consent from the owner or tenant of the subject dwelling prior to seeking the issuance of an inspection warrant under this section.

Note: The maintenance requirements for elevators and the provisions regulating existing unsafe buildings and structures are contained in Part III of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, also known as the “Virginia Maintenance Code.”

B. Section 104.1.1 Rental inspections. In accordance with Section 36-105.1:1 of the Code of Virginia, this section is applicable to rental inspection programs. For purposes of this section:

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"Dwelling unit" means a building or structure or part thereof that is used for a home or residence by one or more persons who maintain a household.

"Owner" means the person shown on the current real estate assessment books or current real estate assessment records.

"Residential rental dwelling unit" means a dwelling unit that is leased or rented to one or more tenants. However, a dwelling unit occupied in part by the owner thereof shall not be construed to be a residential rental dwelling unit unless a tenant occupies a part of the dwelling unit which has its own cooking and sleeping areas, and a bathroom, unless otherwise provided in the zoning ordinance by the local governing body.

The local governing body may adopt an ordinance to inspect residential rental dwelling units for compliance with the USBC and to promote safe, decent and sanitary housing for its citizens, in accordance with the following:

1. Except as provided for in subdivision 3 of this subsection, the dwelling units shall be located in a rental inspection district established by the local governing body in accordance with this section, and
2. The rental inspection district is based upon a finding by the local governing body that (i) there is a need to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the

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occupants of dwelling units inside the designated rental inspection district; (ii) the residential rental dwelling units within the designated rental inspection district are either (a) blighted or in the process of deteriorating, or (b) the residential rental dwelling units are in the need of inspection by the building department to prevent deterioration, taking into account the number, age and condition of residential dwelling rental units inside the proposed rental inspection district; and (iii) the inspection of residential rental dwelling units inside the proposed rental inspection district is necessary to maintain safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for tenants and other residents living in the proposed rental inspection district.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize a locality-wide rental inspection district and a local governing body shall limit the boundaries of the proposed rental inspection district to such areas of the locality that meet the criteria set out in this subsection, or

3. An individual residential rental dwelling unit outside of a designated rental inspection district is made subject to the rental inspection ordinance based upon a separate finding for each individual dwelling unit by the local governing body that (i) there is a need to protect the public health, welfare and safety of the occupants of that individual dwelling unit; (ii) the individual dwelling unit is either (a) blighted or (b) in the process of deteriorating; or (iii) there is evidence of violations of the USBC that affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for tenants living in such individual dwelling unit.

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For purposes of this section, the local governing body may designate a local government agency other than the building department to perform all or part of the duties contained in the enforcement authority granted to the building department by this section.

Before adopting a rental inspection ordinance and establishing a rental inspection district or an amendment to either, the governing body of the locality shall hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance. Notice of the hearing shall be published once a week for two successive weeks in a newspaper published or having general circulation in the locality.

Upon adoption by the local governing body of a rental inspection ordinance, the building department shall make reasonable efforts to notify owners of residential rental dwelling units in the designated rental inspection district, or their designated managing agents, and to any individual dwelling units subject to the rental inspection ordinance, not located in a rental inspection district, of the adoption of such ordinance, and provide information and an explanation of the rental inspection ordinance and the responsibilities of the owner thereunder.

The rental inspection ordinance may include a provision that requires the owners of dwelling units in a rental inspection district to notify the building department in writing if the dwelling unit of the owner is used for residential rental purposes. The building department may develop a form for such purposes. The rental inspection ordinance shall not include a registration requirement or a fee of any kind associated with the written

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notification pursuant to this subdivision. A rental inspection ordinance may not require that the written notification from the owner of a dwelling unit subject to a rental inspection ordinance be provided to the building department in less than 60 days after the adoption of a rental inspection ordinance. However, there shall be no penalty for the failure of an owner of a residential rental dwelling unit to comply with the provisions of this subsection, unless and until the building department provides personal or written notice to the property owner, as provided in this section. In any event, the sole penalty for the willful failure of an owner of a dwelling unit who is using the dwelling unit for residential rental purposes to comply with the written notification requirement shall be a civil penalty of up to \$50. For purposes of this subsection, notice sent by regular first class mail to the last known address of the owner as shown on the current real estate tax assessment books or current real estate tax assessment records shall be deemed compliance with this requirement.

Upon establishment of a rental inspection district in accordance with this section, the building department may, in conjunction with the written notifications as provided for above, proceed to inspect dwelling units in the designated rental inspection district to determine if the dwelling units are being used as a residential rental property and for compliance with the provisions of the USBC that affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for the tenants of such property.

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If a multifamily development has more than 10 dwelling units, in the initial and periodic inspections, the building department shall inspect only a sampling of dwelling units, of not less than two and not more than 10% of the dwelling units, of a multifamily development, which includes all of the multifamily buildings which are part of that multifamily development. In no event, however, shall the building department charge a fee authorized by this section for inspection of more than 10 dwelling units. If the building department determines upon inspection of the sampling of dwelling units that there are violations of the USBC that affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for the tenants of such multifamily development, the building department may inspect as many dwelling units as necessary to enforce the USBC, in which case, the fee shall be based upon a charge per dwelling unit inspected, as otherwise provided in the fee schedule established pursuant to this section.

Upon the initial or periodic inspection of a residential rental dwelling unit subject to a rental inspection ordinance, the building department has the authority under the USBC to require the owner of the dwelling unit to submit to such follow-up inspections of the dwelling unit as the building department deems necessary, until such time as the dwelling unit is brought into compliance with the provisions of the USBC that affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for the tenants.

Except as provided for above, following the initial inspection of a residential rental dwelling unit subject to a rental inspection ordinance, the building department may

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inspect any residential rental dwelling unit in a rental inspection district, that is not otherwise exempted in accordance with this section, no more than once each calendar year.

Upon the initial or periodic inspection of a residential rental dwelling unit subject to a rental inspection ordinance for compliance with the USBC, provided that there are no violations of the USBC that affect the safe, decent and sanitary living conditions for the tenants of such residential rental dwelling unit, the building department shall provide, to the owner of such residential rental dwelling unit, an exemption from the rental inspection ordinance for a minimum of four years. Upon the sale of a residential rental dwelling unit, the building department may perform a periodic inspection as provided above, subsequent to such sale. If a residential rental dwelling unit has been issued a certificate of occupancy within the last four years, an exemption shall be granted for a minimum period of four years from the date of the issuance of the certificate of occupancy by the building department. If the residential rental dwelling unit becomes in violation of the USBC during the exemption period, the building department may revoke the exemption previously granted under this section.

A local governing body may establish a fee schedule for enforcement of the USBC, which includes a per dwelling unit fee for the initial inspections, follow-up inspections and periodic inspections under this section.

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The provisions of this section shall not, in any way, alter the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants pursuant to the applicable provisions of Chapter 13 (Section 55-217 et seq.) or Chapter 13.2 (Section 55-248.2 et seq.) of Title 55 of the Code of Virginia.

The provisions of this section shall not alter the duties or responsibilities of the local building department under Section 36-105 of the Code of Virginia to enforce the Building Code.

Unless otherwise provided for in Section 36-105.1.1 of the Code of Virginia, penalties for violation of this section shall be the same as the penalties provided for violations of other sections of the USBC.

C. Section 104.2 Interagency coordination. When any inspection functions under this code are assigned to a local agency other than the local building department, such agency shall coordinate its reports of inspection with the local building department.

D. Section 104.3 Transfer of ownership. If the local building department has initiated an enforcement action against the owner of a building or structure and such owner subsequently transfers the ownership of the building or structure to an entity in which the owner holds an ownership interest greater than 50%, the pending enforcement action shall continue to be enforced against the owner.

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13 VAC 5-63-480. Section 104 Enforcement, generally.

A. Section 104.1 Scope of enforcement. In accordance with §36-105 of the Code of Virginia, the local governing body may also inspect and enforce the provisions of the USBC for existing buildings and structures, whether occupied or not. Such inspection and enforcement shall be carried out by an agency or department designated by the local governing body.

Note: Generally, official action must be taken by the local government to enforce the Virginia Maintenance Code. Consultation with the legal counsel of the jurisdiction when initiating or changing such action is advised.

B. Section 104.1.1 Rental inspections. Rental inspection programs in localities enforcing this code shall be in accordance with Section 104.1.1 of the Virginia Construction Code.

C. Section 104.1.2 Transfer of ownership. If the local building department has initiated an enforcement action against the owner of a building or structure and such owner subsequently transfers the ownership of the building or structure to an entity in which the owner holds an ownership interest greater than 50%, the pending enforcement action shall continue to be enforced against the owner.

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~~C. D.~~ Section 104.2 Fees. In accordance with § 36-105 of the Code of Virginia, fees may be levied by the local governing body in order to defray the cost of enforcement and appeals.

~~D. E.~~ Section 104.3 State buildings. In accordance with § 36-98.1 of the Code of Virginia, this code shall be applicable to state-owned buildings and structures. Acting through the Division of Engineering and Buildings, the Department of General Services shall function as the building official for state-owned buildings.

~~E. F.~~ Section 104.4 Local enforcing agency. In jurisdictions enforcing this code, the local governing body shall designate the agency within the local government responsible for such enforcement and appoint a code official. The local governing body may also utilize technical assistants to assist the code official in the enforcement of this code. A permanently appointed code official shall not be removed from office except for cause after having been afforded a full opportunity to be heard on specific and relevant charges by and before the appointing authority. DHCD shall be notified by the appointing authority within 30 days of the appointment or release of a permanent or acting code official and within 60 days after retaining or terminating a technical assistant.

Note: Code officials and technical assistants are subject to sanctions in accordance with the VCS.

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~~F. G.~~ Section 104.4.1 Qualifications of code official and technical assistants. The code official shall have at least five years of building experience as a licensed professional engineer or architect, building, fire or trade inspector, contractor, housing inspector or superintendent of building, fire or trade construction or at least five years of building experience after obtaining a degree in architecture or engineering, with at least three years in responsible charge of work. Any combination of education and experience that would confer equivalent knowledge and ability shall be deemed to satisfy this requirement. The code official shall have general knowledge of sound engineering practice in respect to the design and construction of structures, the basic principles of fire prevention, the accepted requirements for means of egress and the installation of elevators and other service equipment necessary for the health, safety and general welfare of the occupants and the public. The local governing body may establish additional qualification requirements.

A technical assistant shall have at least three years of experience and general knowledge in at least one of the following areas: building construction, building, fire or housing inspections, plumbing, electrical or mechanical trades, fire protection, elevators or property maintenance work. Any combination of education and experience which would confer equivalent knowledge and ability shall be deemed to satisfy this requirement. The locality may establish additional certification requirements.

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~~G.~~ H. Section 104.4.2 Certification of code official and technical assistants. An acting or permanent code official shall be certified as a code official in accordance with the VCS within one year after being appointed as acting or permanent code official. A technical assistant shall be certified in the appropriate subject area within 18 months after becoming a technical assistant. When required by a locality to have two or more certifications, a technical assistant shall obtain the additional certifications within three years from the date of such requirement.

Exception: A code official or technical assistant in place prior to April 1, 1995, shall not be required to meet the certification requirements in this section while continuing to serve in the same capacity in the same locality.

~~H.~~ I. Section 104.4.3 Noncertified code official. Except for a code official exempt from certification under the exception to Section 104.4.2, any acting or permanent code official who is not certified as a code official in accordance with the VCS shall attend the core module of the Virginia Building Code Academy or an equivalent course in an individual or regional code academy accredited by DHCD within 180 days of appointment. This requirement is in addition to meeting the certification requirement in Section 104.4.2.

~~I.~~ J. Section 104.4.4 Continuing education requirements. Code officials and technical assistants shall attend periodic training courses designated by DHCD.

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~~J.~~ K. Section 104.4.5 Conflict of interest. The standards of conduct for code officials and technical assistants shall be in accordance with the provisions of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, Chapter 31 (§ 2.2-3100 et seq.) of Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia.

~~K.~~ L. Section 104.4.6 Records. The local enforcing agency shall retain a record of applications received, permits, certificates, notices and orders issued, fees collected and reports of inspections in accordance with The Library of Virginia's General Schedule Number Six.

~~L.~~ M. Section 104.5 Powers and duties, generally. The code official shall enforce this code as set out herein and as interpreted by the State Review Board and shall issue all necessary notices or orders to ensure compliance with the code.

~~M.~~ N. Section 104.5.1 Delegation of authority. The code official may delegate powers and duties except where such authority is limited by the local government. When such delegations are made, the code official shall be responsible for assuring that they are carried out in accordance with the provisions of this code.

~~N.~~ O. Section 104.5.2 Issuance of modifications. Upon written application by an owner or an owner's agent, the code official may approve a modification of any provision of this code provided the spirit and intent of the code are observed and public health, welfare

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and safety are assured. The decision of the code official concerning a modification shall be made in writing and the application for a modification and the decision of the code official concerning such modification shall be retained in the permanent records of the local enforcing agency.

~~Θ. P.~~ Section 104.5.2.1 Substantiation of modification. The code official may require or may consider a statement from a professional engineer, architect or other person competent in the subject area of the application as to the equivalency of the proposed modification.

~~P. Q.~~ Section 104.5.3 Inspections. The code official may inspect buildings or structures to determine compliance with this code and shall carry proper credentials when performing such inspections.

~~Θ. R.~~ Section 104.5.4 Notices, reports and orders. Upon findings by the code official that violations of this code exist, the code official shall issue a correction notice or notice of violation to the owner or the person responsible for the maintenance of the structure.

~~R. S.~~ Section 104.5.4.1 Correction notice. The correction notice shall be a written notice of the defective conditions. The correction notice shall require correction of the violation or violations within a reasonable time unless an emergency condition exists as provided under the unsafe building provisions of Section 105. Upon request, the correction notice

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shall reference the code section that serves as the basis for the defects and shall state that such defects shall be corrected and reinspected in a reasonable time designated by the code official.

~~S.~~ T. Section 104.5.4.2 Notice of violation. If the code official determines there are violations of this code other than those for unsafe structures, unsafe equipment or structures unfit for human occupancy under Section 105, the code official may issue a notice of violation to be communicated promptly in writing to the owner or the person responsible for the maintenance or use of the building or structure in lieu of a correction notice as provided for in Section 104.5.4.1. In addition, the code official shall issue a notice of violation for any uncorrected violation remaining from a correction notice established in Section 104.5.4.1. A notice of violation shall be issued by the code official before initiating legal proceedings unless the conditions violate the unsafe building conditions of Section 105 and the provisions established therein are followed. The code official shall provide the section numbers to the owner for any code provision cited in the notice of violation. The notice shall require correction of the violation or violations within a reasonable time unless an emergency condition exists as provided under the building provisions of Section 105. The owner or person to whom the notice of violation has been issued shall be responsible for contacting the code official within the time frame established for any reinspections to assure the violations have been corrected. The code official will be responsible for making such inspection and verifying the violations have

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been corrected. In addition, the notice of violation shall indicate the right of appeal by referencing the appeals section of this code.

Note: Work done to correct violations of this code is generally subject to the permit, inspection and approval provisions of the Virginia Construction Code.

~~F.~~ U. Section 104.5.5 Coordination of inspections. The code official shall coordinate inspections and administrative orders with any other state or local agencies having related inspection authority and shall coordinate those inspections required by the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (13 VAC 5-51) for maintenance of fire protection devices, equipment and assemblies so that the owners and occupants will not be subjected to numerous inspections or conflicting orders.

Note: The Fire Prevention Code requires the fire official to coordinate such inspections with the code official.

~~U.~~ V. Section 104.5.6 Further action when violation not corrected. If the responsible party has not complied with the notice of violation, the code official shall submit a written request to the legal counsel of the locality to institute the appropriate legal proceedings to restrain, correct or abate the violation or to require the removal or termination of the use of the building or structure involved. In cases where the locality so authorizes, the code official may issue or obtain a summons or warrant.

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~~V.~~ W. Section 104.5.7 Penalties and abatement. Penalties for violations of this code shall be as set out in § 36-106 of the Code of Virginia. The successful prosecution of a violation of the code shall not preclude the institution of appropriate legal action to require correction or abatement of a violation.

I certify that this regulation is full, true and correctly dated

Stephen W. Calhoun, Regulatory Coordinator
Department of Housing and Community Development

Date