

Homeowner's Guide to the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code

Uniform...but not really

Many townships, boroughs, and cities in Pennsylvania have amended the state's Uniform Construction Code (UCC) to impose additional, more restrictive requirements than those contained in the state law or the codes adopted by the UCC.

Each municipality has been given a choice to opt-in or opt-out of administering and enforcing the UCC.

Each municipality that has "opted-in" to administer and enforce the UCC must have a designated **Building Code Official**.

To determine if the work you wish to perform will be located in an "opt-in" or "opt-out" jurisdiction, please contact your local municipality or visit this webpage at the Department of Labor and Industry:

http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/lib/landi/bois/asb_lead_ucc_updates/uccmun.htm

Building Code Official

You must contact the designated Building Code Official for the opt-in municipality in which you wish to build, add-onto, remodel, or repair any residential structure, to determine what local amendments to the UCC, if any, that municipality has imposed. *You are required to comply with local amendments to the UCC as well as the state law and the adopted residential code.*

To contact the Building Code Official, please call your township, borough, or city government office during normal business hours.

For an opt-in municipality, the Building Code Official can also provide you with:

- Information on whether the type of work you wish to perform requires a permit
- Permit applications
- Requirements for plans and construction documents required for the type of work you wish to perform
- Permit fee schedules
- Inspection requirements
- Occupancy permit applications and requirements

- Installing/building a sunroom or “three-seasons” room
- Installing any deck that is more than 30” above ground level at any point around the perimeter of the deck
- Installing any deck less than 30” above ground level if it has a roof/covering above it
- Installing an indoor or outdoor hot tub or spa
- Constructing an in-ground swimming pool (inside or outside)
- Installing any swimming pool (including inflatable type) that has a water depth of 24” or more
- Installing any fence high than 6’
- Installing any retaining wall higher than 4’
- Structural alterations to an existing dwelling unit (Building Code Official will determine if the work you intend to perform involves structural alterations)
- Changes to an existing means of egress (exit door, stairs, handrails, guard systems, ramps)
- Any portion of a dwelling or residential accessory structure that will be used for commercial purposes (open to employees or the public). Examples include:
 - Professional offices
 - Business offices
 - Notaries
 - Beauty shops, nail salons, barber shops
 - Car or equipment repair

Permits must be applied for and issued before any work may begin. All work performed on residential buildings and their accessory structures must comply with the most current edition of the **International Residential Code**, published by the International Code Council. This code is re-published every three years with changes and additions. We are currently utilizing the 2006 International Residential Code in Pennsylvania and will continue to do so until the end of 2009.

You may ask to inspect a copy of the International Residential Code at the offices of any opt-in municipality. If you wish to purchase a copy for yourself, you may do so by contacting the Pennsylvania Construction Codes Academy at 717-763-0930.

Building permit and inspection fees

The UCC does not establish fees for permit applications and inspections. All fees regarding building permits and inspections are adopted by the elected officials in each municipality and must be made publicly available. Ask your Building Code Official or municipality secretary/manager for a copy of the fee schedule that has been adopted by resolution.

difficulties when you eventually try to sell your house or property, as all structures built after April 4, 2004 must have legal certificate of occupancy.

Appeals

If you believe that a Building Code Official or inspector in an opt-in municipality has made an improper decision regarding a permit application, inspection, or certificate of occupancy, you may appeal their decision to the municipal UCC Board of Appeals. Every opt-in municipality **must** have a UCC Board of Appeals.

If you wish to file an appeal, ask your Building Code Official or municipal secretary/manager for a copy of the appeal application and determine what fees may be associated with such an appeal.

More information...

The Department of Labor and Industry's website contains a broad range of information regarding the UCC, local enforcement, certified code officials, and third party agencies. Feel free to visit their website at:

<http://dli.state.pa.us/landi/cwp/view.asp?a=310&q=210892&landiRNavrad3DFC3=/>