

INTRODUCTION – CALIFORNIA'S CODE PROCESS

1. How are they made, and who makes them?

- California codes are developed on a triennial basis
 - The principle governing body that determines which code to adopt is the [Building Standards Commission](#)
 - Several state agencies have jurisdiction over different types of occupancies. The one which has jurisdiction over dwellings and manufactured homes is the Department of Housing and Community Development

2. What are they now?

- The 2013 California Codes are modeled upon the 2012 editions of the International Building Code, International Fire Code, International Residential Code, Uniform Mechanical Code, and Uniform Plumbing Code. Additionally, the 2013 suite of codes includes the California Energy Code and the California Green Building Standards, and the 2011 National Electrical Code. These codes became effective January 1, 2014. Permit applications after that date must use these codes.
- While you can use the model codes mentioned above for most things, it is important to use the California codes, not the model codes. There are many amendments, and certain portions only apply to specific occupancies, as explained in the California Matrix Adoption Tables at the beginning of each code chapter.

3. How can I get them?

- They can be purchased in hard cover from [BUILDER'S BOOKSOURCE](#).
- The Energy Code can be downloaded [here](#):
- Codes based on I-codes can be viewed at the [ICC free ECodes site](#).
- The electrical code can be viewed [here](#).
- The CPC can be downloaded [here](#), including supplements and errata.
- The CMC can be downloaded [here](#), including supplements and errata
- The first printings of codes can be downloaded free (sometimes) [here](#).

4. Why should I care since I'm a home inspector?

- Do home inspectors use code even if they don't quote it?
- Do 3rd parties require clearance of home inspection issues?
- How has the business changed over the years?

5. Does the state amend the model codes?

- Each agency has amendments for the occupancies which they regulate.
- Only the State Fire Marshal (SFM) and Department of Housing & Community Development make amendments affecting single family homes

6. Are there local amendments?

- In theory, local amendments can only be more restrictive, and must be based upon topographic, geologic, or climatic reasons.
- San Francisco does not use the CRC.
- Most local amendments are available on line as municipal ordinances
Examples: [San Francisco](#), [Oakland](#)

7. When is the next round of changes?

- Interim supplements go into effect July 1, 2012. These primarily affect accessibility.
- The next complete set of codes will be the 2016 codes, effective in January, 2017.

8. What happens when two codes are in conflict?

- Specific rules trump general rules.
- The most restrictive code applies.
- The Mechanical Code prevails over the Plumbing Code.

9. Why two building codes? How do we know which code to use?

- 1- & 2-Family Dwellings and Townhouses use the CRC.
- All other buildings use the CBC.
- Buildings within the scope of the CRC use it for all nonstructural issues.
- Buildings within the scope of the CRC may use it for structural issues within the prescriptive limits of the CRC. Beyond those limits, they use the CBC. In some cases, the CRC is used for all of the structural issues other than the ones exceeding its limits, and in other cases all of the structural issues are done per the CBC.
- It is always OK to use the CBC for structural issues, except for section 2308 (conventional light-frame construction), which cannot be used for items within the scope of the CRC.

10. What are some of the main gray areas?

- When do we use the Residential Code and when do we use the Building Code?
- When can a remodel be considered an alteration and when does it trigger “new construction” requirements for the entire dwelling?
- What happens when I want to replace the fenestration in a dwelling that does not meet current setback requirements?
- When does a remodeling project trigger a need for automatic fire sprinklers?
- When do smoke alarms require a hard-wired power source?
- When do carbon monoxide alarms require a hard-wired power source?