

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1187 Florida Building Code

SPONSOR(S): Murzin

TIED BILLS: IDEN./SIM. BILLS:

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Local Government Council		Smith	Hamby
2) Growth Management Committee			
3) State Infrastructure Council			
4) _____			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Florida Building Code (Code) was authorized by the 1998 Florida Legislature to be the sole document incorporating all building standards adopted by all enforcement agencies and state agencies that license different types of facilities. The Code was developed and is updated and maintained by the Florida Building Commission (Commission).

HB 1187 authorizes the Commission to amend the Code to implement revised wind-design standards for new construction in the state, including the windborne-debris requirements applicable to the region from the western border of Jefferson County west to the Florida-Alabama line. Depending on the Commission’s final adopted standard, new construction in the impacted areas may be required to incorporate increased protection for structural openings (doors and windows).

This bill repeals the statutory definition of “Exposure category C,” leaving that determination to the Commission’s authority to define the term within the Code development process.

This bill corrects a reference to the International Code Council as it relates to adoption of the foundation codes of the updated Code.

The bill provides for the Commission to expedite the adoption and implementation of the triennial update of the Code pursuant only to the provisions of chapter 120, F.S. The special update and amendment requirements of section 553.73, F.S., and the administrative rule requiring additional delay time between adoption and implementation of such Code are waived. The bill restricts the types of amendments that may be adopted through this process.

This bill prohibits interpretations under section 553.775, F.S., of the Florida Accessibility Code for Building Construction and chapter 11 of the Code, providing that this section of law has no effect on the Commission’s authority to waive the accessibility Code provided by section 553.512, F.S.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on the private sector.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide limited government – The bill allows the Commission to adopt wind-design standards for Northwest Florida. The bill authorizes the Commission to utilize rule-making procedures in chapter 120, F.S., rather than section 553.73, F.S., in implementing certain provisions within this bill. The bill prohibits interpretations of the Accessibility Code for Building Construction and chapter 11 of the Code.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

The Florida Building Code - Building codes establish minimum safety standards for the design and construction of buildings by addressing such issues as structural integrity, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, lighting, heating, air conditioning, ventilation, fireproofing, exit systems, safe materials, energy efficiency, and accessibility by persons with physical disabilities. In doing so, these regulations protect lives and property, promote innovation and new technology, and help to ensure economic viability through the availability of safe and affordable buildings and structures.

Section 553.73, F.S., provides for the Florida Building Code. The Code was authorized by the 1998 Florida Legislature to be the sole document incorporating all building standards adopted by all enforcement agencies and state agencies that license different types of facilities. The Code was developed and is updated and maintained by the Florida Building Commission (Commission) that works towards consistency of standards throughout the state and full accessibility to information on the standards. The law allows for differences in the standards in different locales based on compelling differences in physical conditions. However, the law establishes procedures for administration of the Code at all levels that will constrain unwarranted differences and ensure the availability of information on local differences to all parties throughout the state.

The law established the Commission as the body which is responsible for the development of the Code and the other elements of the system which support its implementation. The Commission has 23 members, appointed by the Governor, representing engineers, architects, contractors, building owners and insurers, state and local governments and persons with disabilities.

The Code is updated every three years by the Commission. The Commission may amend the Code once each year to incorporate interpretations and update standards upon a finding that delaying the application of the amendment would be contrary to the health, safety, and welfare of the public, or the amendment provides an economic advantage to the consumer. A proposed amendment must include a fiscal impact statement which documents the costs and benefits of the proposed amendment. Criteria for the fiscal impact statement are established by rule and must include the impact to local government relative to enforcement, the impact to property and building owners, as well as to industry, relative to the cost of compliance. The 2004 Florida Building Code is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2005.

The Commission also is authorized to hear appeals from decisions of local boards regarding the interpretation of the Code; issue declaratory statements relating to the Code; determine the types of products requiring approval for local or statewide use and provide for the evaluation and approval of such products, materials, devices, and method of construction for statewide use; and develop a Building Code Training Program.

Non-Binding Interpretations of the Florida Building Code - The 2002 Legislature provided an additional mechanism for guidance when interpreting the Code.¹ It authorized the Commission to

¹ Chapter 2002-193, s. 16, L.O.F.

recognize an outside entity to consult with Code officials and industry, and to issue nonbinding advisory opinions. These advisory opinions were to be developed by licensed code enforcement officials. The Commission selected the Building Officials Association of Florida (BOAF) as the entity to work with toward this end.

Requests for opinions are received through the Commission's Internet site, and are then forwarded to BOAF and its experts on varied subject matters from industry and local building departments. The advice of these experts is directed to an experienced building official who drafts a response and forwards it to a select group of licensed and active building Code enforcement officials familiar with the subject matter as assigned by BOAF. These officials make the final determination of the response, which then is forwarded to the questioner and posted on both the BOAF site and in the Commission's Building Code Information System. The electronic information system can be queried for advisory opinions and declaratory statements by subject area for any section of the Code. The Commission reports that more than 1,000 advisory opinions have been issued through this process since its inception.

Because the Code is an administrative rule, interpretations of the Code that are of general applicability must comply with the provisions of ss. 120.536 and 120.54, F.S. The consensus of opinion by stakeholders was that necessary binding interpretations of the Code require a more expedited resolution than is afforded by the Code amendment and update process or the rulemaking provisions of ch. 120, F.S.

The 2005 Legislature created section 553.775, F.S., which allows the Commission, by rule, to establish an informal process of rendering interpretations of the Code. This section also provides that local building departments may approve minor changes to state approved plans under the prototype building program.

Current law sets forth a procedure for the Commission to review decisions of local building officials and local enforcement agencies regarding interpretations of the Code. Local agencies retain the primary responsibility for interpreting the Code, consistent with declaratory statements and interpretations by the Commission. While anyone may petition the Commission to issue a declaratory statement, review of local interpretations of the Code must be appealed through the following system:

- First, the Commission is directed to coordinate with the Building Officials Association of Florida, Inc. (BOAF), a statewide organization of municipal and county codes enforcement officials, to designate panels composed of five hearing officers to hear requests to review decisions of local building officials. These hearing officers must be members of a statewide organization of code enforcement officials and licensed as building code administrators and have experience interpreting and enforcing provisions of the Code.
- The request to review a decision of a local building official's interpretation of the Code may be initiated by any substantially affected person. Requests for review, or petitions, must be submitted to the Commission, who then forwards the information to a panel of hearing officers and to the local building official, and posts the petition on the Building Code Information System. The local building official then provides a written response to the panel. The petitioner then replies to the hearing officers addressing the information provided by the local building official. The panel must then conduct a proceeding to resolve the issue and publish its interpretation. The panel has 21 days after the date the petition is filed to complete the review.
- The petitioner may then file an appeal of the decision to the Commission. The burden of proof in any proceeding is on the party who initiated the appeal. Local decisions declaring structures to be unsafe and subject to repair or demolition are not subject to review under this process. These local decisions may not be appealed to the Commission if the local governing body finds that there is an immediate danger to the health and safety of the public. Similarly, the

Commission only has advisory powers with respect to any decision of the State Fire Marshal made under chapter 633, F.S.

The Commission also may establish an informal process of rendering non-binding interpretations of the Code. The Commission may refer interpretive issues to organizations that represent those engaged in the construction industry. The resulting interpretations are advisory only and nonbinding on the parties and the Commission.

The Commission is authorized to impose a fee not to exceed \$250 for binding interpretations for each request for review or interpretation. For third-party proceedings the payment may be made directly to the third-party who must remit to the DCA that portion of the fee necessary to cover the DCA's costs.

Prior to its integration into the Code in 2002, the Accessibility Code was statutorily adopted within chapter 553, F.S. Avenues of interpretation of the Code were specifically and definitively restrictive based on concerns by advocates for the disabled that the authority to interpret conferred the power to limit the implementation of the accessibility provisions within that Code. Upon its integration, however, the Accessibility Code became subject to interpretation by Declaratory Statement by the Commission, and subsequently by non-binding and binding opinion by a third-party. Based on the historical practice and present concerns of advocates for the disabled, the Commission has recommended restricting interpretation of the accessibility provisions.

Hurricane Protection - The Commission established standards for hurricane protection in the Code that are based on a national model building code, federal regulations, and standards evolving out of southeast Florida's experience with Hurricane Andrew. Specifically, for protection against hurricane waters, the Code incorporates the flood plain management standards of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Flood Insurance Program for the entire state. For coastal construction it incorporates the Florida "coastal building zone" storm surge protection standards.

The Code requires that new homes throughout the state be designed to resist external wind speeds that the American Society of Civil Engineers standard (ASCE 7-98) predicts will experience sometime within a 50 to 100-year time period. In November of 1999, the Commission agreed with the developers of ASCE 7 and applied additional requirements in what is called the "wind-borne debris region" to ensure that buildings inside this region also will be able to withstand internal wind pressure caused by the penetration of flying debris. This region includes areas expected to experience winds of 120 mph or greater as well as areas within one mile of the coast that experience at least 110 mph winds.

Subsection (3) of section 109 of chapter 2000-141, L.O.F., directs the Commission to adopt for areas of the state not within the high velocity hurricane zone, pursuant to section 553.73, F.S., the wind protection requirements of the ASCE, Standard 7, 1998 edition as modified by the Commission in its February 15, 2000, adoption of the Code.² However, the Legislature stipulated that from the eastern border of Franklin County to the Florida-Alabama line, only land within one mile of the coast is subject to the windborne-debris requirements adopted by the Commission. This subsection provides for the exact location of wind speed lines to be established by ordinance using specified physical landmarks, and provides that buildings constructed within the windborne debris region must be either designed for internal pressures resulting from a broken window or door or a hole in the walls or roof, or be designed

² Subsection (3), section 109, Ch. 2000-141, L.O.F., states: *For areas of the state not within the high velocity hurricane zone, the commission shall adopt, pursuant to s. 553.73, F.S., the wind protection requirements of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Standard 7, 1998 edition as implemented by the International Building Code, 2000 edition, and as modified by the commission in its February 15, 2000, adoption of the Florida Building Code for rule adoption by reference in Rule 9B-3.047, Florida Administrative Code. However, from the eastern border of Franklin County to the Florida-Alabama line, only land within 1 mile of the coast shall be subject to the windborne-debris requirements adopted by the commission. The exact location of wind speed lines shall be established by local ordinance, using recognized physical landmarks such as major roads, canals, rivers, and lake shores, wherever possible. Buildings constructed in the windborne debris region must be either designed for internal pressures that may result inside a building when a window or door is broken or a hole is created in its walls or roof by large debris, or be designed with protected openings. Except in the high velocity hurricane zone, local governments may not prohibit the option of designing buildings to resist internal pressures.*

with protected openings. The subsection further provides that except in the high velocity hurricane zone, local governments may not prohibit the option of designing buildings to resist internal pressures.

The ASCE 7 standard considers both wind speeds that can be developed by hurricanes and factors such as terrain and shielding by other buildings which affect the strength of those winds when they impact buildings. Exposure A is characteristic of large cities with large expanses of tall buildings. Exposure B is characteristic of suburban areas with large expanses of short and medium height buildings and wooded areas. Exposure C is characteristic of areas of exposed expanses of open terrain or open water. Section 553.71, F.S., defines "exposure category C" to mean, except in the high velocity hurricane zone, that area which lies within 1,500 feet of the coastal construction control line, or within 1,500 feet of the mean high tide line, whichever is less. On barrier islands, exposure category C is applicable in the coastal building zone set forth in section 161.55(5), F.S.

Commission Recommendations - In January of 2005, the Commission issued a report entitled, *The Florida Building Code Commission Report to the 2005 Legislature*. This report contained a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Code. The report included the following specific recommendations relating to wind protection provisions:

- Eliminate the edition designation and referenced amendments of the ASCE Standard 7 currently in section 109, ch. 2000-141, L.O.F., and allow updated editions of the standard to be adopted through updates to the Code.
- Eliminate the designation of the wind-borne debris region for the Panhandle region of Florida from ch. 2000-141, L.O.F., and allow the wind-borne debris region for that area to be determined by the Code.
- Eliminate the definition of the wind exposure class C from section 553.73, F.S., and allow the definition of ASCE 7, as adopted by the Code, to be used.
- Authorize the Commission to make determinations related to designing for internal pressures.

Changes Enacted During the 2005 Legislative Session – During the 2005 Regular Session, the Legislature addressed several issues relating to wind-design standards. Chapter 2005-147, L.O.F., directed the Commission to update the Code with the most recent and relevant design standards for wind resistance of buildings issued by the ASCE, notwithstanding subsection (3) of section 109, ch. 2000-141, L.O.F. However, the bill specified that this provision was intended to *explicitly supersede only the first sentence of that law*.³ As a result, the bill effectively exempted the Panhandle region from the requirement that the Commission utilize the most current edition of the wind protection requirements contained in ASCE 7.

The bill also instructed the Commission and local building officials to evaluate the damage from Hurricane Ivan and make recommendations to the Legislature for changes to the Code as it relates to the region from the eastern border of Franklin County to the Florida-Alabama line. Finally, the bill required the Commission to evaluate the definition of "exposure category C" as currently defined in section 553.71(10), F.S., and make recommendations for a new definition that more accurately depicts the Florida-specific conditions prior to the 2006 Legislative Session.

Post-Session Commission Deliberations – Pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 2005-147, L.O.F., the Commission convened several workshops to solicit input from local building officials and other stakeholders in the Panhandle region of the state. Much of the discussion centered on the extent to which property damage resulted from hurricane-related storm surges versus windborne debris. Similarly, considerable discussion focused on the impact of revised windborne debris protection requirements on the costs of housing in the region. At the conclusion of the initial workshop, there was consensus for the strategy of conducting a study on the treed environment effects and historical wind data affects, prior to making recommendations to the Legislature regarding the existing definition and whether to recommend changes.⁴

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Report to the Florida Building Commission, Florida Panhandle Windborne Debris Region Workshop I, September 14, 2005.*

At the second workshop, the Commission representatives voted unanimously to contract with a consultant to conduct an engineering-based risk assessment of hurricane windborne debris protection options for the Panhandle in order to analyze the risks, costs, and benefits of windborne debris protection for the region. The research would focus on factors unique to the Panhandle region including treed areas inland of the coast, and consider historical wind data affects. The requested funding authorization was approved, and the preliminary research results will be presented to the Commission in March of 2006, and subsequently input will be solicited at a follow-up workshop. Following the workshop, the Commission will use the study results and stakeholder input, to make its recommendations to the 2006 Legislature as required by law.⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

This bill authorizes the Commission to amend the wind design standards contained in the Code subject to the amendatory requirements contained in section 553.73, F.S. In addition, the bill specifically authorizes the Commission to identify within the Code those areas of the state from the western border of Jefferson County west to the Florida-Alabama line (the Panhandle region) that are subject to the windborne debris requirements of the Code. The Commission's initial designation of windlines for this region must address the results of the Florida Panhandle Windborne Debris Region study and is only subject to the rule adoption procedures contained in chapter 120, F.S. This authorization expressly supersedes the limitations contained in section 109 of chapter 2000-141, L.O.F.

The bill allows the Commission to eliminate or revise the existing "Panhandle exception" (limiting windborne debris requirements to within 1 mile of the coast) and amend the wind design standards applicable to the Panhandle region to incorporate the current edition of the national model building code engineering standard (American Society of Civil Engineers Standard 7, 2002 Edition). This would subject new construction in the Panhandle region to the same windborne debris requirements (enhanced door and window protection) applicable to other areas of the state. The bill also authorizes the Commission to utilize expedited rule-making procedures pursuant to chapter 120, F.S., rather than section 553.73, F.S., in implementing this provision.

This bill repeals the statutory definition of "Exposure category C," leaving that determination to the Commission's authority to define the term within the Code development process.

This bill corrects a reference to the International Code Council as it relates to adoption of the foundation codes of the updated Code.

The bill provides for the Commission to expedite the adoption and implementation of the triennial update of the Code pursuant only to the provisions of chapter 120, F.S. The special update and amendment requirements of section 553.73, F.S., and the administrative rule requiring additional delay time between adoption and implementation of such Code are waived. The bill provides that the Commission shall approve amendments pursuant to this provision only to the extent necessary to address: conflicts within the updated Code, conflicts between the updated Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code adopted pursuant to chapter 633, F.S., omission of previously adopted Florida-specific amendments to the updated Code if the omission is not supported by a specific recommendation of a technical advisory committee or particular action by the Commission, or unintended results from the integration of previously adopted Florida-specific amendments with the model Code.

This bill prohibits interpretations under section 553.775, F.S., of the Florida Accessibility Code for Building Construction and chapter 11 of the Code, providing that this section of law has no effect on the Commission's authority to waive the accessibility Code provided by section 553.512, F.S.

⁵ Report to the Florida Building Commission, Florida Panhandle Windborne Debris Region Workshop II, February 16, 2006.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

- Section 1: Amends subsections (10) and (11) of section 553.71, F.S., deleting the statutory definition of "Exposure category C."
- Section 2: Amends subsection (6) of section 553.73(6)(a), F.S., providing that the *applicable model code entity* adopts the foundation codes of the updated Code instead of the International Code Council; creating a process that addresses issues identified by the Commission to amend the updated Code pursuant only to the rule adoption procedures contained in chapter 120, F.S.; providing authorities that have jurisdiction to enforce the Code may enforce the recommended corrections to the Code after approval; providing amendment approval pursuant only to: conflicts within the updated Code, conflicts between the updated Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code adopted pursuant to chapter 633, F.S., omission of previously adopted Florida-specific amendments to the updated Code if the omission is not supported by a specific recommendation of a technical advisory committee or particular action by the Commission, or unintended results from the integration of previously adopted Florida-specific amendments with the model Code.
- Section 3: Creates section 553.775, F.S., restricting interpretations of the Florida Accessibility Code for Building Construction and chapter 11 of the Code.
- Section 4: Authorizes the Commission to amend the wind design standards contained in the Code subject to the amendatory requirements contained in section 553.73, F.S; authorizing the Commission to identify within the Code those areas of the state from the western border of Jefferson County west to the Florida-Alabama line (the Panhandle region) that are subject to the windborne debris requirements of the Code; providing the Commission's initial designation of windlines for this region must address the results of the Florida Panhandle Windborne Debris Region study and is only subject to the rule adoption procedures contained in chapter 120, F.S; providing this authorization expressly supersedes the limitations contained in section 109 of chapter 2000-141, L.O.F.
- Section 5: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2006.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government expenditures.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The impact of the bill on homebuilders, and ultimately, home buyers is indeterminate. To the extent the bill results in increased construction costs associated with enhanced window and door protection, homebuilders and homebuyers could be adversely impacted. However, these costs could be offset by benefits, primarily in the form of reduced hurricane-related property damage.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

According to the Department of Community Affairs, increased cost of construction is likely, but dependent on the Commission's utilization of the authority granted. Design and construction to withstand internal pressure results in minimal cost increase of a home, and use of shutters and other impact resistant openings can likely be achieved at a cost of around \$2,000. These costs will ultimately be passed on to the consumer in the sales price of the building, but should be offset over time by savings on insurance.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable, because this bill does not appear to: require the counties or cities to spend funds or take an action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that cities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with cities or counties.

2. Other:

There do not appear to be other constitutional issues with the bill.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill authorizes the Commission to utilize expedited rule-making procedures in chapter 120, F.S., rather than section 553.73, F.S., in implementing certain provisions within this bill.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Drafting Issues

Section 4 of the bill, lines 132 – 136, states the following, "The Florida Building Commission is specifically authorized to identify within the Florida Building Code those areas of the state from the *western border of Jefferson County west to the Florida-Alabama line* that are subject to the windborne debris requirements of the code." However, subsection (3) of section 109, 2000-141, L.O.F., provides, "However, from the *eastern border of Franklin County to the Florida-Alabama line*, only land within 1 mile of the coast shall be subject to the windborne-debris requirements adopted by the commission."

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

Not Applicable.