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Contents

About the Editors .................................................. v

Module 1: Code Background and Organization. ................. 1

Module 2 General Code Provisions: Administration and General Requirements ............................................. 7

Module 3: General Code Provisions: Definitions and Classifications . . . . 17

Module 4: General Code Provisions: Performance-Based Option .... 27

Module 5: Construction and Compartmentation: General Requirements ......................................................... 33

Module 6: Means of Egress: General Requirements ............... 45

Module 7: General Healthcare Requirements: Application ....... 55

Module 8: General Healthcare Requirements: Additions, Conversions, and Renovations ...................................... 59

Module 9: General Healthcare Requirements: Mixed Occupancies . 65

Module 10: General Healthcare Requirements: Special Definitions and Classifications ....................................... 69

Module 11: General Healthcare Requirements: Minimum Construction and Occupant Load .................................... 73

Module 12: Means of Egress: General Requirements and Doors . . 79

Module 13: Means of Egress: Stairs and Smokeproof Enclosure . . . 97

Module 14: Means of Egress: Horizontal Exits, Ramps, Passageways, and Areas of Refuge ..................................... 111

Module 15: Means of Egress: Capacity and Number of Exits ....... 127
Contents

Module 16: Means of Egress: Arrangement .......................... 141
Module 17: Means of Egress: Travel Distance and Exit Discharge . 153
Module 18: Means of Egress: Illumination, Emergency Lighting, and Marking (Signage) .................................................. 161
Module 19: Means of Egress: High-Hazard Contents Areas and Mechanical Spaces ....................................................... 169
Module 20: Protection: Vertical Openings .............................. 173
Module 21: Protection: Hazardous Areas .............................. 183
Module 22: Protection: Interior Finish .................................. 189
Module 23: Protection: Fire Detection and Alarm Systems ........... 195
Module 24: Protection: Fire Extinguishment Systems ................. 203
Module 25: Protection: Corridors ....................................... 209
Module 26: Protection: Smoke Compartments ....................... 217
Module 27: Special Protection and Provisions ......................... 225
Module 28: Building Services .......................................... 229
Module 29: Operating Features ......................................... 235
Module 30: Business Occupancies—Part 1 ......................... 241
Module 31: Business Occupancies—Part 2 ........................... 253
Module 32: Ambulatory Healthcare Facilities—Part 1 ............... 259
Module 33: Ambulatory Healthcare Facilities—Part 2 ............... 265
Module 34: Building Rehabilitation ..................................... 271
About the Editors

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James Lathrop, former chief life safety engineer for the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the editor of four editions of the Life Safety Code Handbook, is currently an instructor of NFPA seminars and vice president with Koffel Associates, Inc., a fire protection engineering and code consulting firm. He is active on numerous NFPA committees, including serving as chair of the NFPA 101 Means of Egress Committee and the NFPA 99 Piping Systems Committee.

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Module 1

Code Background and Organization

Critical Issues

Development of the Code

- The Code dates back to the early 1900s.
- The Code is based in part on lessons learned from significant fires.
- The Code is a consensus document published by the NFPA
  - The NFPA staff doesn’t write the Code but provides the “vehicle” through which the Code is developed.
  - Various committees are responsible for portions of the Code.
  - The committees are composed of representatives of differing interests, which provide a “balanced” committee. Healthcare committee members, for example, include:
    - Fire marshals
    - Consultants
    - Healthcare providers
    - Governmental agencies (Veterans Administration and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS])
    - The Joint Commission (TJC)
• Anybody can submit proposed changes to the Code. These are referred to as “public input.” There is also a comment period.
• The membership of NFPA votes at meetings to approve or reject proposals.
• NFPA Standards Council oversees the process.

**Enforcement of the Code**

- Since the Code is written by a nongovernmental agency (the NFPA), application (enforcement) is not mandatory unless legally adopted by federal, state, county, or local government.
- CMS (formerly the Health Care Financing Administration, or HCFA) and/or TJC may require compliance for aid or accreditation.
- The Code is a nationally recognized standard often cited in litigation
  - Compliance is voluntary.

**Arrangement of the Code**

The Code has three major sections.

Section I contains the fundamental chapters (1–11), which apply to all occupancies:
- 1: Administration
- 2: Mandatory References (Note: Existing installations that do not comply with all the requirements of the mandatory references may continue in service if approved by the authority
having jurisdiction [AHJ] and if there is no serious hazard to life safety presented by the deficiency.)

❖ 3: Definitions
❖ 4: General
❖ 5: Performance-Based Option
❖ 6: Classification of Occupancy and Hazard of Contents
❖ 7: Means of Egress
❖ 8: Features of Fire Protection
❖ 9: Building Service & Fire Protection Equipment
❖ 10: Interior Finish, Contents, and Furnishings
❖ 11: Special Structures and High-Rise Buildings

Section II contains the occupancy chapters (12–42); the requirements set forth in these chapters are based on the use (or occupancy) of a building. Most occupancies have separate chapters for “new” and “existing” buildings.

❖ 12 & 13: Assembly Occupancies
❖ 14 & 15: Educational Occupancies
❖ 16 & 17: Day-Care Occupancies
❖ 18 & 19: Healthcare Occupancies
❖ 20 & 21: Ambulatory Healthcare Occupancies
❖ 22 & 23: Detention and Correctional Occupancies
❖ 24: One- and Two-Family Occupancies
❖ 25: Reserved for Future Use
❖ 26: Lodging and Rooming Houses
❖ 27: Reserved for Future Use
❖ 28 & 29: Hotels & Dormitories
❖ 30 & 31: Apartment Buildings
❖ 32 & 33: Residential Board and Care Occupancies
❖ 34 & 35: Reserved for Future Use
❖ 36 & 37: Mercantile Occupancies
Module 1—Code Background and Organization

- 38 & 39: Business Occupancies
- 40: Industrial Occupancies
- 41: Reserved for Future Use
- 42: Storage Occupancies

Section III contains the Annexes:
- Annex A: Explanatory Material (This is not a part of the Code and should not be enforced as such.)
- Annex B: Non-Mandatory Referenced Publications (Publications reference Annex A and therefore are not mandatory.)

The Code also contains an index.

Use of the Code

- Changes to the Code from a previous edition are marked with a vertical bar. This might be a new or a revised paragraph
  - Editorial changes are not indicated.
- An asterisk (*) following the Code section indicates that explanatory materials are contained in Annex A.
- In later editions, a bullet (•) is used to indicate where text has been removed.
- Most requirements in the fundamental chapters (1–11) apply to all occupancies
  - Some fundamental requirements apply only where required by another section and are indicated by “where required by Chapters 12–42.”
- Some fundamental requirements/exceptions apply only if required/permitted by the occupancy chapters, as indicated by “where permitted by Chapters 12–42.”
Module 1—Code Background and Organization

❖ Some fundamental exceptions are permitted unless specifically prohibited by the occupancy chapters, as indicated by “unless prohibited by Chapters 12–42.”

**Significant Changes**

2000: There were two major changes in the 2000 edition of the Code, including a brand-new chapter on the performance-based option. Module 4 discusses this chapter. The second change, and for the healthcare industry the change with the biggest nontechnical impact, is a total reorganization of the Code. This is the first time since 1981 that the Code has received a significant revision to its chapter organization. Table 1.1 provides a cross-reference between the 1997 and 2000 editions (this is very similar for 1985 to 2000, but with some minor differences). This reorganization was made to comply with the new NFPA Manual of Style and to provide room for the new chapter on the performance-based option. Since the Code was going to have to be renumbered for those two reasons, the committee took the opportunity to move day-care occupancies back to follow educational occupancies, where it belongs. In addition, the committee moved ambulatory healthcare out of the healthcare chapter into its own chapters. The committee reordered the residential occupancies in order of increasing size (one- and two-family dwellings, followed by lodging and rooming houses and hotels). Strategic chapters were reserved for future use in order to prevent renumbering of chapters in the near future.

There is a series of small changes in the Existing Healthcare chapter and related chapters to make using the 2000 edition of the Code less onerous on healthcare facilities that were formerly regulated under the 1985 and older editions of the Code. Each of the individual modules throughout this field guide addresses specific changes to particular Code requirements. See Tables 1.1 and 1.2 on the following pages for more information.

2003: The 2003 edition of the Code had very limited changes and focused mostly on technical changes to make requirements clearer. In addition, the style was changed again to move exceptions from under a specific requirement to be a portion of the requirement and reword them to be included in the requirement’s actual body.

2006: The 2006 edition of the Code is when we first see changes to the healthcare suite requirements and the introduction of Chapter 43 on building rehabilitation.

2009: The 2009 edition ushered in better correlations between the Life Safety Code and other codes, and we see specific requirements pulled from other codes and placed in NFPA 101.

2012: There were numerous changes to the 2012 edition of the Code to make it ready to be the next edition adopted by CMS. Healthcare occupancy changes included the clarification of some suite requirements and locking requirements. The 2012 edition has many changes that benefit healthcare facilities. Numerous small technical changes have been made to the Code through all the editions and are not discussed in this field guide.
The New LIFE SAFETY CODE®

Field Guide for Healthcare Facilities

Jennifer L. Frecker • James K. Lathrop


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