

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS CODE BULLETIN OF INFORMATION No. F-0101 R1		CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA ----- TITLE 4 — BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPANCY CODE
SUBJECT OF BULLETIN: <p style="text-align: center;">SHAFT ENCLOSURES</p>		REFERENCE CODE SECTION(S): F-704.1 F-4603.3
ISSUED BY		
NAMES: David L. Wismer, P.E., C.B.O. Richard A. Bailey, Battalion Chief	SIGNATURES: _____	ISSUE DATE August 16, 2001 (Revised 8/10)
TITLES: Director of Planning and Code Development, Dept. of Licenses and Inspections Chief, Fire Code Unit, Fire Department		PAGE 1 OF 1

ISSUE:

There is uncertainty among some departmental inspectors regarding the application of Fire Prevention Code Section F-704.0 and F-704.1 in particular, as applied to the enclosure of stairways in existing buildings.

DISCUSSION:

The overlying concept to remember is that the *Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code* and *Philadelphia Property Maintenance Codes* are retroactive codes. They apply to all existing premises in the City unless they specifically state otherwise.

The *Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code*, with few exceptions, requires the enclosure of existing stairways. Section F-704.1 states that “all interior shafts shall be enclosed with approved assemblies, except as provided for in Chapter 46.” Shafts within buildings are vertical openings that connect or pass through two or more floor levels. Examples of shafts include stairways, pipe chases, utility chases, mechanical shafts, trash chutes, elevator shafts and dumbwaiter shafts. Note that this bulletin will use the generic term “shaft,” but the concerns of most of inspectors involve stairways. The enclosure requirements in Section F-704.1 apply to all existing buildings, including those where an open shaft was built at the time that the building was constructed.

Open shafts are serious fire hazards. During a fire, an open shaft enables smoke and heat to freely circulate from floor to floor in a building. Open shafts provide stack (chimney) effect, which encourages the rapid upward movement of the fire and all of the products of combustion. The smoke and heat in the means of egress will delay or prevent occupants from escaping a fire within a building. Most fire deaths are the result of excessive smoke inhalation, not direct exposure to the flame. For this reason, both the Building and Fire Prevention Codes require the enclosure of shafts or compliance with very specific exceptions.

