

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS <b>CODE BULLETIN OF INFORMATION</b> <b>No. B-9903</b>		CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA <hr/> TITLE 4 — BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPANCY CODE
SUBJECT OF BULLETIN:  EXISTING BUILDING COMPLIANCE ALTERNATIVES — FIRE PROTECTION		REFERENCE CODE SECTION(S):  B-3408.3.2; B-3408.6.17; F-503.4(4); F-503.4.2; F-503.5
ISSUED BY		ISSUE DATE
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TITLE: Director of Planning and Code Development, Dept. of Licenses and Inspections		PAGE 1 OF 2

**ISSUE:**

The department has been experiencing an increase in the number and scope of buildings that are taking advantage of the compliance alternative provisions of Section 3408.0 the *Philadelphia Building Code*. This is brought about by the increased activity of conversion of existing buildings to new uses and more enlightened design professionals and developers.

Our plan examination staff has been challenged regarding the application of Section B-3408.0 and the *Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code*. The questions relate to whether one or the other of the code provisions supersede another, particularly as they relate to standpipe and sprinkler fire protection.

**DISCUSSION:**

Section B-3408.0 was developed to provide an alternative to Chapters 2 through 33 of the Building Code. The purpose is to provide a number of compliance paths for flexibility in preparing an existing building for occupancy, as alternatives to the more direct requirements imposed on new construction. The alternatives permit a design professional to provide for a new use or extensive alterations while avoiding impossible or infeasible compliance measures. It is not however, the intent of the Building Code to circumvent those provisions of the fire prevention or property maintenance codes that are applicable to the buildings in question. Specifically, Section B-3408.3.2 states:

“All buildings that are evaluated in accordance with this section shall comply with the fire prevention and property maintenance codes.”

Sections F-503.4(4) and F-503.4.2 of the current Philadelphia Fire Prevention Code require the retroactive installation of sprinklers throughout existing high-rise buildings except those portions of the building that are occupied as R-2 (Residential Multi-family) Use Group. These provisions were established by ordinance signed into law December 18, 1991, and provided up to eight years for total compliance. This ordinance was written and passed with the full knowledge of the compliance alternatives offered by the Building Code, but chose not to exempt existing buildings that comply with those provisions.

Similarly, Section F-503.5 requires the retroactive installation of Fire Department standpipes (Class I) in buildings that do not have them and have occupied floors more than six stories above grade. The fact that Section B-3408.0 is silent on standpipes does not preclude compliance with the Fire Code requirement for standpipes.

**DIRECTION:**

Based on the above cited code sections and the legislative history of the provisions, the department will regulate existing buildings that are reviewed under Section 3408.0 of the Building Code in the following manner.

When a building satisfies the compliance alternative analysis with a passing score as determined by Section B-3408.9, the requirements of the Fire Prevention Code shall also apply. For sprinkler and standpipe systems this means that:

- High-rise buildings require automatic sprinkler installation throughout all floor areas that are not occupied as R-2 Multi-family Residential Use Group.
- Where a building is converted from another Use Group to R-2 or is an existing R-2 Use Group, and the building satisfies the provisions of Section B-3408.0 of the Building Code, the portions of the building that are occupied as R-2 are exempt from sprinklers in accordance with Section F-503.4. This also means that certain areas of the R-2 Use Group will require sprinklers in accordance with the Fire Prevention Code.
- Class I (Fire Department use) standpipes are required in any existing building that has occupied floors more than six stories above grade. An **existing** single Class I standpipe located in an enclosed exit stairway is acceptable. Should the building not contain at least one Class I standpipe located in an enclosed exit stairway, the requirements of Section F-503.5(1) shall apply (See Code Interpretation F-9901).