

Life Safety Code

December 2018

PART 100 UPDATE FACT SHEET

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is updating from the outdated NFPA 101, Life Safety Code: 2000 Edition to the 2015 edition to benefit residents with new methods, technologies, and refined life safety-related requirements.

What is the Life Safety Code?

Sometimes called the state fire code, the Life Safety Code is really an “exit code”, developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and intended to allow occupants time to exit a building during an emergency. In most areas, the OSFM-adopted code edition serves as the state’s minimum fire safety standard.

Why is the OSFM updating the Life Safety Code?

- The NFPA 101, Life Safety Code: 2000 Edition, adopted in 2002 and still currently used by the OSFM, is outdated.
- The 2000 edition relies on technology available during its development nearly 20 years ago and cross-references similarly outdated editions of other fire protection-related codes and standards.
- Using an outdated edition may negatively impact the design and construction of new buildings by holding them back from advancements in technology and safety over the last two decades.
- In contrast, the 2015 edition incorporates new methods, technologies, and knowledge gained from real-world experiences. It also references updated standards for the design and installation of important building systems and equipment that are more in line with contemporary business practices.

What’s the same with this update?

Many of the requirements for existing occupancies remain the same between editions, so many existing buildings will see few, if any, changes.

- Fire sprinklers for one and two-family homes will remain a recommendation at the state level. Individual homeowners and communities will continue to make the choice whether to require home fire sprinklers for themselves.
- The fire sprinkler requirements for existing high-rise buildings and existing assembly occupancies, which have been in effect since 2002, would continue to be used in lieu of those found in the 2015 edition.

What’s different with this update?

With the adoption of the 2015 edition, the OSFM is also adopting additional modifications to make compliance with certain code requirements easier. Although a fact sheet cannot cover all possible changes for every occupancy addressed by the code, some of the changes that Illinoisans will see with this update include:



• **Local Municipal Compliance**

The update establishes a process for determining municipal fire prevention and safety code equivalence to help simplify local code enforcement. Compliance with the OSFM-adopted code will still be required in state buildings, state licensed facilities, and other occupancies under the purview of the OSFM.

• **Door Locking**

- All occupancies, except schools under the codes and rules of the Illinois State Board of Education, will be given guidance and be permitted to use door locking to help control unwanted entry. This allows buildings to provide additional security measures while maintaining fire safety.
- New options for locking arrangements allow group homes to deter runaways without meeting stricter requirements of a detention and correctional occupancy.

• **New Construction**

Newly built structures, typically those locations designed to hold large numbers of occupants, built after the effective date will now have amended requirements for fire sprinklers. This life-saving technology can offer new buildings significant flexibility during initial design and construction.

- New night club occupancies will now be required to have fire sprinklers, regardless of size and occupancy load.
- New places of worship with more than 300 occupants will now be required to have fire sprinklers.

• **Redefining “Story Level”**

Many occupancies will be permitted to use an alternative definition for “story level” to increase flexibility to comply with the code.

• **Residential Board and Care Facilities**

- Both new and existing Residential Board and Care Facilities with fire sprinkler systems already in place will be required to extend the system into attic spaces, unless the location meets conditions for the use of a heat detection alternative.
- Residential Board and Care Facilities with occupants having an “impractical” evacuation capability will also require fire sprinklers. This provides enhanced protection and greatly increases the chance of survival for individuals who are unlikely to be able to evacuate in the event of a fire.

• **Historic Structures**

Qualified historic structures may elect to comply with NFPA 914, Code for Fire Protection in Historic Structures: 2010 Edition.

• **New High-Rises**

New high-rises are required to have equipment to assist with fire department operations. Additionally, new high-rises with an occupant load over 4,000 must also install video monitoring in stairways.

• **Apartment Buildings**

Apartment buildings may find flexibility in meeting life safety requirements by utilizing NFPA 101A, Guide on Alternative Approaches to Life Safety: 2016 Edition.