



Wisconsin Commercial Building Code

Helpful Hints

The Wisconsin Commercial Building Code applies whenever a covered building is built, added onto, altered, or when used for certain new purposes that have different applicable code requirements, as for example, a warehouse to an apartment building conversion. Covered alterations include those affecting structural strength, fire hazard, and exiting. An existing building, save for a few exceptions, shall be maintained to meet the code under which it was approved.

1. Design

- a. Pursuant to chapter 443 stats., a public building, structure or place of employment shall be designed by an architect or an engineer, except as provided under ss. 443.14 and 443.15, stats.
- b. Pursuant to chapter 443, Stats., a component or a system, including an electrical system, fire protection system, heating ventilating and air conditioning system, or a plumbing system for a public building, structure or place of employment shall be designed by an architect, engineer or a designer of an engineering system.

2. Supervision by registered engineer, architect or building designer. Wisconsin registered design professionals must be used whenever:

- a. The total completed building volume meets or exceeds 50,000 cubic feet. Volume is based on the actual cubic foot space within the exterior structure of the building including attics, basements, enclosed porches, and garages.
- b. The design professional must sign and seal each plan page or an indexed cover page listing all the sheets.
- c. A registered supervising professional shall also be retained from project start to completion and shall make periodic on-site observations to help ensure the building is constructed in accordance with the approved plans.
- d. Upon completion of the project, the supervising professional must file a Compliance Statement with Safety and Buildings certifying that the construction project or the portion to be occupied has been performed in substantial compliance with the approved plans and specifications.
- e. Out of state designers that are not registered in Wisconsin shall work with a Wisconsin registered design professional.
- f. Smaller projects under 25,000 cubic feet, an owner may elect to have a registered design professional prepare plans and file a "Building Registration" in lieu of submitting plans for review.

3. Responsibilities (Owner) Compliance with the Wisconsin Commercial Building Code does not relieve the owner of a public building or place of employment from compliance with

the administrative rules established by other state jurisdictions. The Owner is ultimately responsible for:

- a. Obtaining plan review approval and local permits.
 - b. Hiring registered designers and competent contractors.
 - c. Providing accurate information to the designer including the building or structures intended use and/or change of use.
 - d. Provide the name of the supervising professional to monitor and oversee the project.
 - e. Signing the plan approval application form when requesting permission to start foundation work before plan review.
 - f. Correcting code non-compliance issues noted by inspectors or by the supervising professional.
 - g. Maintaining the building or structure per all applicable codes.
4. **Plan Review and Approval.** Plans for all new construction, alterations, additions and change-in-use to a public building or place of employment shall not commence unless plans for the project have been submitted to an approved department or its authorized representative. Plans exempt from plan review include:

Buildings containing less than 25,000 cubic feet in volume.

- a. Assembly Group A-2
- b. Business Group B
- c. Factory Group F
- d. Mercantile Group M
- e. Storage Group S
- f. Utility and Miscellaneous Group U

Buildings exempt from plan review if registered and containing 25,000 to less than 50,000 cubic feet in volume:

- a. Assembly Group A-2
- b. Business Group B
- c. Factory Group F
- d. Mercantile Group M
- e. Storage Group S
- f. Utility and Miscellaneous Group U

Containing less than 25,000 cubic feet in volume:

- a. Assembly Group A-1, A-3, A-4, A-5
- b. Educational Group E
- c. High Hazard Group H
- d. Residential Group R

All of these projects and building groups are covered by the current commercial code, even though plans don't have to be submitted to the state, these buildings shall meet all applicable requirements of the code. This plan review exemption does not apply to other occupancies such as repair garages, apartment buildings or to theaters, churches or

restaurants serving over 100 people. Plan review exemptions also does not apply to occupancies such as hazardous buildings, schools and daycare centers.

5. **Plan approval expirations:** Where plan approval is required by this code, one set of plans bearing the stamp of conditional approval and a copy of the specifications shall be kept at the building site. The plans and specifications shall be open to inspection by the department or its authorized representative.
 - a. **Building shell.** Plan approval by the department or its authorized representative for new buildings and additions shall expire 2 years after the approval date.
 - b. **Occupancy.** For new buildings and additions shall expire 3 years after the approval date.
 - c. **Alterations.** Interior building alterations shall expire 1 year after the approval date.
 - d. **HVAC construction only.** Heating ventilating and air conditioning construction that does not include any associated building construction shall expire 1 year after the approval date.
 - e. **Fire protection systems only.** Fire protection systems that does not include any associated building construction shall expire 2 years after the approval date.
6. **Existing buildings and structures.** An existing building or structure, and every element, system, or component of an existing building or structure shall be maintained to conform to the building code requirements that applied when the building, structure, element, system or component was constructed, and to conform with Chapter 14 whenever applicable
7. **Change of use or occupancy.** No change may be made in the use or occupancy of any building or structure, or any space within a building or structure, that would place the building, structure or space either in a different division of the same group of occupancies, unless the building, structure or space complies with the code's requirements for the new division or group of occupancies, as these requirements exist on one of the following dates:
 - a. The date when plans for the change in occupancy or use are approved by the department or authorized representative.
 - b. The date a local building permit is issued, if plan submittal and approval is not required under s. Comm. 61.30
 - c. The date construction is initiated.
 - d. The date an occupancy permit is issued.