

To: Department of Buildings Customers and Staff
From: Matthew Beaudet, Commissioner
RE: Extension of Plumbing Materials Pilot Program
Date: December 16, 2020

Overview and Authority

Section 18-29-105 of the Municipal Code authorizes the Building Commissioner to permit the use of alternative materials, methods and equipment for plumbing applications either when those materials are equivalent to those called for in Chapter 18-29 (2001 Chicago Plumbing Code) or when the strict requirements of Chapter 18-29 cause practical difficulties and the alternative proposal will conform to the intent and purpose of Chapter 18-29. The purpose of Chapter 18-29 is to establish minimum standards to protect safety, health, property, and public welfare. To evaluate the performance and relative cost of commonly-available plumbing materials in applications not currently authorized by the Chicago Plumbing Code, but allowed by the Illinois Plumbing Code, the Department launched a pilot program to accept and review requests for approval of alternative plumbing materials in October 2017. The Department is currently working to develop an ordinance based on data gathered through the pilot program.

The pilot program for water distribution pipe and pipe fittings is now closed to new requests. The Department will review the data it gathered from this program. The pilot program for alternative drainage and vent pipe and pipe fittings will continue through **March 1, 2021**, for requests meeting the following requirements:

A. Eligible Projects

The following projects are eligible to participate in the pilot program (“eligible projects”):

1. New construction of buildings of exclusively residential occupancy, not more than four stories in height; or
2. Any work in an existing building (constructed prior to 2010) of any occupancy, and not more than four stories in height, including additions to such buildings.

B. Drainage and Vent Pipe and Pipe Fittings

Instead of materials allowed by Section 18-29-702 for drainage and vent pipe and pipe fittings, the applicant will propose specific alternative material(s) authorized for such use by the Illinois Plumbing Code, 77 Ill. Admin. Code 890, and:

1. The work will occur as part of an eligible project;
2. The applicant will submit to the Department both (a) a price proposal from a licensed plumbing contractor to install materials permitted by Section 18-29-702, and (b) a price proposal from the same plumbing contractor to install the proposed alternative material in substantially the same configuration;
3. The applicant will identify in the request any practical difficulties that will be alleviated by permitting use of the proposed alternative material;
4. The applicant will pay the alternative code approval review fee of \$150.00; and
5. The applicant will submit, with the request, a statement from the selected plumbing contractor, architect, or engineer of record evaluating the relative quality, strength, effectiveness, durability, and safety of the materials to be used in each proposal. (Plumbing contractors applicants may complete the yes/no question on the application form. All others must submit a separate signed letter.)

Note 1: If the application is submitted directly by the only plumbing contractor proposed to perform the work, the information required in items 2 and 5 may be provided on the 1-page application. All other applicants, and applications proposing the use of more than 1 plumbing contractor, must attach supporting documents.

Note 2: Approval for alternative underground drainage and vent pipe and pipe fitting materials under this pilot program is limited to the building drain (house drain) (within 5 feet of the building foundation per 18-29-201). The building sewer (house sewer) is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Water Management (DWM) and must be built of a material listed in Table 18-29-702.3.

Note 3: For horizontal plastic pipe, the Illinois Plumbing Code provides: "Hangers and straps shall not compress, distort, cut or abrade the piping and shall allow free movement of the pipe. Wire pipe hooks shall not be used to support plastic pipe. Restraining joints and expansion joints shall be installed as required. All horizontal piping shall be supported at intervals of not more than 4 feet, and at ends of branches, and at changes of direction or elevation. Trap arms in excess of 3 feet shall be supported as close as possible to the trap." Contractors found not to be meeting this requirement in the field, especially for underground piping, may be disqualified from further participation in the pilot program.

C. Combustible Pipe - Protection of Penetrations in Fire Rated Floors and Walls

When combustible pipe material is authorized under this pilot program, all penetrations through fire-rated floors or walls must be protected in accordance with Section 14B-7-714 of the Municipal Code of Chicago (2019 Chicago Building Code). In such cases, details of the protection required at such penetrations must be included in the permit drawings.

D. Inspections

All plumbing work performed pursuant to this pilot program must pass an in-person rough inspection by a City plumbing inspector. All alternative materials must be installed in strict conformance with the approved plans, manufacturer's requirements, and the Illinois Plumbing Code.

E. Requests

The plumbing materials pilot program will accept requests through **March 1, 2021**, however the Building Commissioner may modify or end the pilot program at any time before that date.

Requests must be submitted on official pilot program request forms, which are available on the Department's web site at www.cityofchicago.org/buildings > Supporting Information > Alternative Code Approval.

Before submitting a request, the applicant must pay a \$150.00 alternative code approval review fee to the Department of Finance using an official payment form. A copy of the receipt must be attached to the request as proof of payment.

Requests and proof of payment must be submitted by e-mail to altcodeapproval@cityofchicago.org.

Requests to approve plumbing work which was previously installed without a permit or contrary to a permit will be denied.

Each request will be evaluated by the Department to determine if permitting the alternative material will either alleviate a practical difficulty, provide a result equivalent to the requirements of 18-29, or both.

Applicants should allow 10 business days for review of complete requests. Decisions will be e-mailed to the applicant.

The applicant must then obtain a permit for the plumbing work and attach a copy of the approved request form to the permit application or permit application drawings.

If the work has already been permitted (but not yet performed), the applicant must obtain a revision to the existing permit through the easy permit process. Revisions to change plumbing materials as approved through this pilot program are subject to a \$75.00 fee.

Questions about the program may be directed to altcodeapproval@cityofchicago.org.