



## **Building Code Clarifications - 34. Repairs, Renovations, Alterations**

### **34.1 (13-200-330) Exit requirements - Assembly and Institutional occupancies**

Section (13-196-010) requires buildings to comply with the applicable provisions of the code at the time of its construction or at the time of its alteration. An **alteration** is defined in section (13-4-010) as “any change in the occupancy classification or any change or modification of construction or space arrangement in any existing building. . .”

The entire assembly unit or institution unit space must conform to all new construction requirements of Chapter (13-160) regarding number, width, location, access to, and enclosure when one of the following occurs:

- 1) The occupancy of an existing building or portion thereof is changed to an assembly unit or an institution unit.
- 2) An existing assembly unit or an institution unit undergoes an architectural and/or a structural renovation or alteration which involves 50% or more of the square footage of the institutional or assembly space.

Existing fire escapes may be permitted where such exits now serve the existing building. A supervisor of plan examiners, prior to the plan submission, must review any situation in which bringing the existing life safety features of the building up to the current code requirements is unreasonable or a hardship.

### **34.2 (13-200-200) Change of occupancy**

When the occupancy of an existing building or portion thereof is so changed resulting in an occupancy class two or more hazard index numbers higher than its present occupancy class, as defined in Section 34(13-200-170), the entire building shall meet the requirements of Municipal Code of Chicago for new construction.

### **34.3 (13-200-380) Light and ventilation requirements - Existing buildings**

This interpretation does not apply to buildings changing occupancy.

All existing residential buildings that were built or converted before the year 1957 can receive the required natural light and ventilation from the window openings that are minimum two feet six inches (2'-6") from the interior lot line. This ruling applies to all existing conditions where the footprint or the ground floor size of the buildings remains unchanged. Minimum three (3) feet set back from the interior lot line of the wall

containing the windows is required for all new ground floor additions. The maximum building height is 36'-0".

#### **34.4 (13-200-260) Replacement of existing porches and decks**

Section 13-200-260 allows for the replacement of existing porches or decks "in the same location with construction of the same type as that of the existing porch or deck". The Department has interpreted that this section allows the basic configuration of the porch to remain without changing the size or location of the porch relative to the building it serves or to the interior lot lines. This code section also allows existing porches of combustible wood construction to be replaced with new combustible construction even if the existing combustible porch is closer to interior lot lines than allowed by the requirements for new construction in Section 15-8-320.

The Department will allow a maximum 10% increase in the size of the replacement porch's overall dimensions or deck area when it can be demonstrated that this increased area is used to correct or improve compliance with the following life safety deficiencies with the existing porch:

1. Removal of stair winders (13-160-300)(d)
2. Providing code conforming tread widths and nosing depths (13-160-300)(b)
3. Providing code conforming riser heights. (13-160-300)(b)(c).
4. Widening an exit stair, deck or walkway which is part of the porch egress path to provide the minimum required clear exit width required by (13-160-220)(b)
5. Providing proper intermediate stair or floor level landings. (13-160-310)
6. Removing structural blockage or obstruction to an egress path. (13-160-070)
7. Providing proper headroom clearance along the path of egress (13-160-3500).
8. Providing for new porch structure in areas where there are existing structural constraints.

The increase in area shall occur only on the existing building's property and is subject to approval by the Zoning Department.

#### **34.5 (13-196-205) & (13-196-207) Materials and installation standards for retrofit fire protection systems**

On December 15, 2004, the city codes were changed to require most pre-1975 high-rise buildings to be retrofitted with automatic sprinklers. Landmark and non-transient residential high-rise buildings were excluded from this requirement. Instead, a life safety evaluation will be required to be performed on these buildings.

Code section 34(13-196-207) lists materials and installation standards that existing pre-1975 high-rise buildings can use to retrofit the building with sprinklers. This code section can be used for any pre-1975 high-rise building that decides to retrofit the building with automatic sprinklers. This code section can be applied if the building is not required by code to retrofit with automatic sprinklers.