

# VA UP TO CODE

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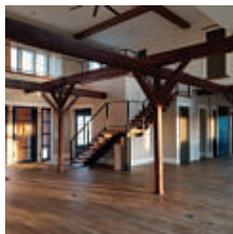
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## With updates ahead, a look at Virginia building codes



COURTESY OF  
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There's no avoiding it; it's coming. Another update to the Virginia Uniform Statewide

Building Code (VUSBC) is tentatively scheduled to go into effect in September. So, a brief overview of the who, what, when, where, and why behind our state building code requirements seems timely.

### Background

The United States does not have a national building code. Instead, building codes are adopted and enforced entirely at the state and local level. This allows for code adaptation based on prevailing environmental conditions such as sun, wind, rain, snow load and material availability that can vary widely across the country and even within a state. That said, most ju-

risdictions, including Virginia, base their building codes on model codes published by the International Code Council (ICC) and updated every three years.

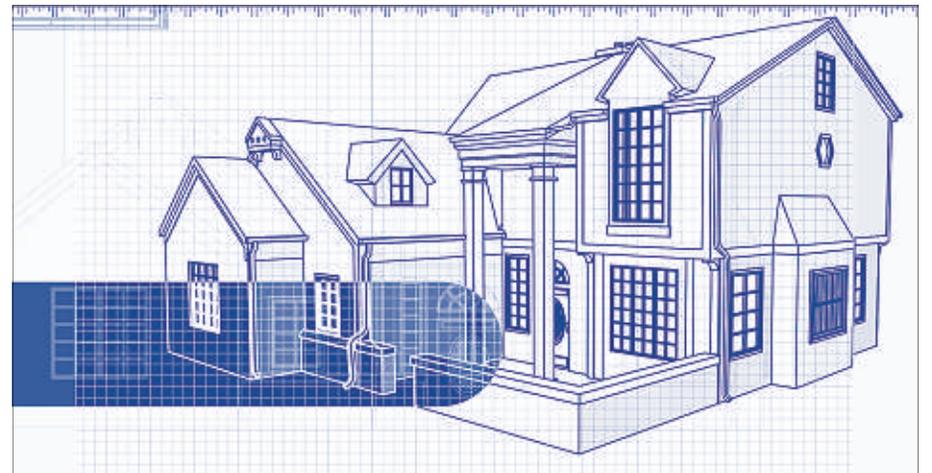
Unlike Virginia, not all states have mandatory building codes. Several states (Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Missouri and Texas, to name a few) leave it up to individual municipalities to adopt building codes. In many rural areas it is still legal to construct structures using any standards or no standards at all as determined by the designers and builders. There is also a wide discrepancy in licensure and educational requirements for building designers and construction

contractors. Encouraged by FEMA and informed by the loss of life and property from recent natural disasters, the trend is for more localities to adopt mandatory building codes.

In Virginia, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) oversees the state's building code known as the

VUSBC. However, enforcement of the code is up to local municipalities. Each county, town or city can add code, but it cannot reduce or eliminate the minimum VUSBC requirements. Periodically, DHCD coordinates a review and updates the VUSBC. Updates typically run

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