

Building Code Training Needs in Pennsylvania

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Preface and acknowledgments

This report is one of several projects conducted by the Pennsylvania Housing Research Center (PHRC) to identify the training and education needs of the home building and remodeling industries. Its intended audience includes policy makers at state and local governments, educators, providers of building code training, and professional and trade associations.

This project received financial and other support from the following groups:

- The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED),
- The Pennsylvania Builders Association (PBA),
- The individuals, associations, and corporations that are members of the PHRC,
- The Pennsylvania College of Technology, and
- The Pennsylvania State University.

The report was researched and written by Mark Fortney, Assistant Director of the PHRC, and Robert Buddenbohn, Project Specialist at the Pennsylvania College of Technology's Technology Transfer Center.

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The PHRC is responsible for initiating and producing this report. Two of our more general objectives are to stimulate discussion about housing and to promote the development of housing in Pennsylvania. We therefore welcome questions or other feedback regarding the report.

Eric F. P. Burnett
Director

Executive summary

This report addresses building-code-related training needs in Pennsylvania. The information on which it is based was gathered as part of a larger effort by the PHRC to determine the training and educational needs of

people currently working in, or being trained for employment in, the residential and light commercial construction industry.

The intended audience for this report comprises policymakers at the state and local level, providers of building-code training, educators, and residential construction and remodeling associations. It is intended to serve as a planning tool to assist in the development of building-code-related education and training programs.

The objectives were to determine existing code-related training needs and to identify anticipated training needs when a uniform, statewide building code is established. These needs were then compared with the code-related training currently available within the state, in order to identify gaps. The target groups we looked at included builders, remodelers, code enforcement officials, educators, trade and professional associations, and state and local government representatives.

At the start of the project it became apparent that little was known about the prevalence and use of building codes across the state. For this reason, we expanded the scope of the project, and began by gathering facts about the current situation in Pennsylvania. Relevant findings include the following:

- Pennsylvania is one of 14 states without a statewide building code.
- Of Pennsylvania's 2,569 municipalities, 56% do not have a building code in place.
- Larger municipalities tend to have a building code.
- Most of the population (80%) live in areas that have a building code.
- Of the fastest-growing municipalities, 21.5 % did not have a building code.
- Of the municipalities that have a code, 57% use an up-to-date code, issued between 1990 and 1998.

Information was gathered from surveys and interviews to determine training needs. This information is reported by audience, with each audience rated as to the need and interest it expressed with regard to attending building-code-related training. This rating is provided not only for existing training needs and but also for the anticipated needs when a statewide building code is enacted.

Building-code officials and builders and remodelers in coded municipalities expressed the strongest need for, and interest in, building-code training. Code enforcement officials were interested in a variety of topics, including general code training and training targeted to understanding new construction technologies and what to look for during plan reviews and inspections. Builders were interested in, among other things, general building code information and information on common code violations.

Educational and training opportunities in Pennsylvania were examined. The training now available is not provided in a coordinated manner, but rather on an ad-hoc basis. Training is aimed at an exclusive audience and is frequently intended for members of associations. The lack of coordination between training programs creates inefficiencies and lack of consistency. When a state-wide building code is enacted, a coordinated effort will be necessary to address the much greater need for training of all of the groups involved in the residential construction industry.

This investigation produced four recommendations that should be pursued by the PHRC and others to enhance the availability and affordability of building code training. They are summarized as follows:

1. Establish the Pennsylvania Building Code Training Consortium.

2. Develop and conduct New and Emerging Technology Workshops—training for code officials.
3. Develop and conduct CABO I & II Family Dwelling Code Workshops—training for builders and remodelers.
4. Develop and conduct Introduction to Building Codes Workshops—training for builders and remodelers.