

If You're Not Using Pennsylvania's New Construction Code, You Need to Be

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Last month, Pennsylvania adopted the most comprehensive update to its Uniform Construction Code (UCC) since 2009, and construction professionals need to start adhering to the new rules.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) is responsible for updating the UCC under the advice of the UCC Review and Advisory Council, which is tasked to review and recommend provisions from the International Code (I-Code) to be added to the UCC. The I-Code is an international set of building standards, codes and specifications that have been developed by the International Code Council and adopted by nearly every state in some capacity. The I-Code includes fire, plumbing, energy conservation, and residential building requirements, among other standardized building codes. The I-Code is revised every three years, with the most recent set of revisions occurring in 2018.

Historically, Pennsylvania has only adopted portions of each iteration of the I-Code in its UCC updates. For example, the 2009 I-Code was incorporated into the UCC, but the 2012 I-Code was not incorporated at all. Additionally, only 16 proposed revisions from the 2015 I-Code were added to the UCC in 2015. Standards from the 2009 I-Code therefore continued to be the most prominent in the UCC until this year.

The [latest changes](#) to the UCC became effective October 1, 2018 and essentially adopt the remaining provisions of the 2015 I-Code that were previously rejected in 2015. Newly adopted provisions of the 2015 I-Code include the International Building Code 2015, the International Energy Conservation Code 2015, and the International Fire Code 2015. The new changes bring the UCC to a more current standard, since updates to it had largely remained stagnant since 2009.

A primary goal in the updates is to develop and encourage energy efficient construction practices. While the updates could result in increased costs early on in a project, the more current standards are expected to lead to long-term future savings in building operating costs.

L&I indicates that the new UCC will apply to work done on and after October 1, 2018, as long as a construction permit for the work is filed on and after that date. It is important to note that parties to a construction contract signed before October 1, 2018 may continue to adhere to the prior version of the UCC, but only until March 31, 2019.

The changes to the UCC will impact future construction projects, including the materials, specifications, and general costs of the project. If you have any questions about the UCC changes in particular or how they may affect your project, please [contact me](#) or anyone in [Barley Snyder's Construction Industry Group](#).

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