

**Chapter 51-04 WAC**  
**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION OF STATEWIDE AND LOCAL**  
**AMENDMENTS TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE**

Last Update: 12/8/20

**WAC**

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**WAC 51-04-010 Declaration of purpose.** The Washington state building code council, hereinafter called the council, is required by chapter 266, Laws of 1988, to adopt and maintain the state building code, hereinafter referred to as the building code, as provided in chapters 19.27, 19.27A, and 70.92 RCW, and the state legislature.

(1) The primary objective of the council is to encourage consistency in the building code throughout the state of Washington and to maintain the building code consistent with the state's interest as provided in RCW 19.27.020. An objective of statewide adoption is to minimize state amendments to the model codes.

The building code shall be as defined in WAC 51-04-015(8).

(2) The council is also required by RCW 19.27.074 to approve or deny all city and county amendments to the building code that apply to single family or multifamily buildings as defined in RCW 19.27.015.

(3) The council may issue opinions relating to the codes at the request of a local official charged with the duty to enforce the enumerated codes as specified in RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27A.015.

(4) The purpose of this chapter is to establish policies and procedures for:

(a) Submittal and council review and consideration of proposed statewide amendments to the building code;

(b) Submittal and council review and consideration of proposed city and county amendments to the building code that apply to single family or multifamily buildings as defined in RCW 19.27.074;

(c) Reconsideration of council actions; and

(d) Issuing opinions to local officials.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-010, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-010, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-010, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-010, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90; Order 76-02, § 51-04-010, filed 9/1/76.]

**WAC 51-04-015 Definitions.** (1) "Council" means the Washington state building code council.

(2) "Emergency statewide amendment" means any proposed statewide amendment, the adoption of which is necessary immediately in order to protect life, safety or health of building occupants; preserve the structural integrity of buildings built to the state building code; to correct errors and omissions; or by the direction of the Washington state legislature or federal legislation. Emergency statewide amendments to the state building code must be adopted in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW.

(3) "Local government amendment" means any amendment to the state building code, as adopted by cities or counties for implementation and enforcement in their respective jurisdictions.

(4) "Local government residential amendment" means any amendment to the state building code, as adopted by cities or counties for implementation and enforcement in their respective jurisdictions, that applies to single and multifamily buildings as defined by RCW 19.27.015.

(5) "Local official" and "code official" means the officer or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of the codes adopted under chapters 19.27 and 19.27A RCW.

(6) "Model codes" means the codes developed by the model code organizations and adopted by and referenced in chapter 19.27 RCW.

(7) "Model code organization(s)" means the national code-promulgating organizations that develop the model codes (as defined herein), such as the International Code Council, International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and National Fire Protection Association.

(8) "State building code" means the codes adopted by and referenced in chapter 19.27 RCW; the state energy code; and any other codes so designated by the Washington state legislature as adopted and amended by the council.

(9) "Statewide amendment" means any amendment to the model codes, initiated through council action or by petition to the council from any agency, city or county, or interested individual or organization, that would have the effect of amending the building code for the entire state of Washington. Statewide amendments to the state building code must be adopted in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW.

(10) "State building code update cycle" means that period during which the model code and standards referenced in chapter 19.27 RCW are updated and amended by the council in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW hereinafter referred to as the "adoption period" and those additional periods when code changes are received for review as proposed amendments to the model codes, hereinafter referred to as "submission periods."

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-015, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-015, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-015, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 04-01-107, § 51-04-015, filed 12/17/03, effective 7/1/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and 19.27.074. WSR 98-24-077, § 51-04-015, filed 12/1/98, effective 7/1/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.074. WSR 98-02-048, § 51-04-015, filed 1/5/98, effective 7/1/98. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 94-05-058, § 51-04-015, filed 2/10/94, effective 3/13/94.

Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-015, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-018 Petition for preliminary review.** An agency, city or county, wishing to submit local government residential amendments to the building code for council consideration, may file with the council a petition for preliminary review of the local government residential amendment, in order to solicit comments from council members and interested parties, prior to council action.

The council may refer a petition for preliminary review to one of the council standing committees for review and comment.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-018, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 94-05-058, § 51-04-018, filed 2/10/94, effective 3/13/94. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-018, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-020 Rules for the consideration of proposed statewide amendments.** (1) All petitions for statewide amendments to the building code must be compliant with the requirements set forth in WAC 51-04-025.

(2) The council will accept and consider compliant petitions for emergency statewide amendments to the building code at any time, in accordance with RCW 19.27.074 and chapter 34.05 RCW.

(3) The council will accept and consider compliant petitions for statewide amendments that are submitted within the time periods the council posts for petitions relating to Group 1 and Group 2 amendments to be made in conjunction with the state building code update cycle.

(a) For the purpose of review and adoption of new model code editions and statewide amendment submission, the state building code shall be divided into two groups as follows, unless otherwise directed by the council:

(i) Group 1: International Building Code (IBC); International Existing Building Code (IEBC); International Fire Code (IFC) Washington state energy code-commercial (WSEC-C) and Wildland Urban Interface Code (WUI).

(ii) Group 2: International Residential Code (IRC); International Mechanical Code (IMC); International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC); standards liquefied petroleum gas are National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards 58 and 54; Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC); Washington state energy code-residential (WSEC-R).

(b) During August of the year before the year of the model code edition, the council will post a timeline for Group 1 and Group 2 code update processes, including providing separate periods of at least sixty days for the submission of petitions for statewide amendments for each group the council reserves the right to modify its timeline as it determines necessary and appropriate.

(c) The timeline shall include deadlines for committee transmittal to council of separate reports for Group 1 and Group 2 that identify:

(i) The significant changes contained in the new model codes from the prior model codes;

(ii) The existing state amendments to prior model codes that are proposed to be modified or eliminated; and

(iii) All committee proposed amendments to the new model codes. The reports shall be posted on the council website.

(d) The council shall direct council staff to submit a CR-102 to the code reviser's office containing any proposed rules that the council has approved and shall conduct at least two public hearings for each group (one in western Washington and one in eastern Washington) following the filing of the proposed rules with the code reviser's office.

(e) Upon completion of the council's review of Group 1 amendments (not including Group 1 amendments the council directs be kept open for consideration during the Group 2 period), the council will commence review of Group 2 amendments following the timeline.

(4) The council will accept and consider compliant petitions for all other statewide amendments to the state building code if one or more of the following criteria are met:

(a) The amendment is directed by the legislature;

(b) The amendment is necessary for code correlation, correction of errors, language clarification, or section update; or

(c) The council determines that the amendment would serve a critical public interest and requires immediate/accelerated action.

(5) The council shall review proposed new statewide amendments, and approve those meeting the appropriate criteria to file as proposed rules in accordance with chapter 34.05 RCW. The proposed rules filing shall include a small business economic impact statement in accordance with chapter 19.85 RCW.

(6) The code development period shall conclude with formal adoption of the state building code as amended by the council. As required by RCW 19.27.074, all decisions to adopt or amend the state building code shall be made prior to December 1st and shall not take effect before the end of the regular legislative session in the next year.

Provided, the December 1st deadline shall not apply to emergency rules or expedited adoption of rules under the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW.

(7) State amendments as approved by the council shall be submitted to the appropriate model code organization, at the direction of the council, except those adopted for consistency with state statutes or regulation and held for further review during the adoption period of those model codes by the council.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and 19.27.074. WSR 21-01-049, § 51-04-020, filed 12/8/20, effective 1/8/21. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-020, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-020, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-020, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-020, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 04-01-107, § 51-04-020, filed 12/17/03, effective 7/1/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 94-05-058, § 51-04-020, filed 2/10/94, effective 3/13/94. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-020, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90; Order 76-02, § 51-04-020, filed 9/1/76.]

**WAC 51-04-025 Procedure for submittal of proposed statewide amendments.** (1) Statewide and emergency statewide amendments to the state building code shall conform to the purposes, objectives, and standards prescribed in RCW 19.27.020.

Applications for proposed statewide amendments shall be complete, include a detailed economic analysis of impacts of the proposed statewide amendment and be submitted in writing to the council, on the form provided by the council. The amendment must address existing model code language; a change in the model codes since a previous edition; or an existing state or local amendment to the model code; or a portion of the state code other than the model code. The state building code council shall consider the action of the model code organizations in their consideration of these proposals.

Statewide and emergency statewide amendments to the state building code shall be based on one of the following criteria:

(a) The amendment is needed to address a critical life/safety need.

(b) The amendment clarifies the intent or application of the code.

(c) The amendment is necessary for consistency with state or federal laws and regulations.

(d) The amendment corrects errors and omissions.

(e) The amendment eliminates an obsolete, conflicting, duplicating or unnecessary regulation.

(2) Petitions for statewide amendments to the building code shall be submitted to the council during the submission period and the adoption period in accordance with WAC 51-04-020. Minimum requirements specified on the form for submittals must be included. Incomplete submittals will be held for thirty days and the proponent will be notified with a request for more information. If after thirty days, the applicant has not provided requested information for a complete application, the proponent's proposal will be deemed incomplete and shall not move forward.

(3) Petitions for emergency statewide amendments to the building code may be submitted at any time, in accordance with RCW 19.27.074 and chapter 34.05 RCW, and WAC 51-04-015 and 51-04-020.

The council may refer a proposed statewide amendment to one of the council standing committees for review and comment prior to council action in accordance with chapter 34.05 RCW.

(4) The council shall consider and take action on all proposed statewide amendments within the time frames required by chapter 19.27 RCW, RCW 34.05.330, and all other deadlines established by statute.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-025, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-025, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-025, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 94-05-058, § 51-04-025, filed 2/10/94, effective 3/13/94. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-025, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-030 Policies for consideration of proposed local government residential amendments.** (1) All amendments to the building

code, as adopted by cities and counties for implementation and enforcement in their respective jurisdictions, that apply to single and multifamily buildings as defined by RCW 19.27.015, shall be submitted to the council for approval.

(2) The council shall consider and approve or deny all proposed local government residential amendments to the state building code as presented to the council within ninety calendar days of receipt of a proposal, unless alternative scheduling is agreed to by the council and the proposing entity. Where a proposed local government residential amendment is modified upon adoption by the city or county legislative body, it shall be resubmitted to the council. Local government residential amendments shall not be effective until approved by the council and the local governing authority.

(3) All local government residential amendments to the building code that require council approval shall be submitted in writing to the council, by the authorized local code or elected official, prior to implementation and enforcement of the amendment by the local jurisdiction. All local amendments submitted for review shall be accompanied by findings of fact justifying the adoption of the local amendment in accordance with the five criteria noted below in this section.

(4) It is the policy of the council to encourage joint proposals for local government residential amendments from more than one jurisdiction. Local government residential amendments submitted to the council for approval shall be based on:

(a) Climatic conditions that are unique to the jurisdiction.

(b) Geologic or seismic conditions that are unique to the jurisdiction.

(c) Environmental impacts such as noise, dust, etc., that are unique to the jurisdiction.

(d) Life, health, or safety conditions that are unique to the local jurisdiction.

(e) Other special conditions that are unique to the jurisdiction.

**EXCEPTION:** Local government residential amendments to administrative provisions (departmental operational procedures) contained within the state building code need not be submitted to the council for review and approval provided that such amendments do not alter the construction requirements of those chapters.

(5) Appendices to the codes that affect single and multifamily residential buildings as defined by RCW 19.27.015 that are not adopted by the council shall be submitted to the council for consideration as local government residential amendments to the building code.

Local government residential amendments shall conform to the limitations provided in RCW 19.27.040.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-030, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-030, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-030, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 04-07-193, § 51-04-030, filed 3/24/04, effective 7/1/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and 19.27.074. WSR 98-24-077, § 51-04-030, filed 12/1/98, effective 7/1/99. Statutory Authority: Chapter 19.27 RCW. WSR 95-01-127, § 51-04-030, filed 12/21/94, effective 6/30/95. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-030, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-035 Procedure for submittal of proposed local government residential amendments.** All proposed local government residential amendments to the state building code shall be submitted in writing to the council, on a form provided by the council, along with findings of fact as required in WAC 51-04-030 for the proposed amendment. Local government residential amendments to administrative provisions (departmental operational procedures) contained within the state building code need not be submitted to the council for review and approval provided that such amendment does not affect the construction requirements of those chapters.

The council shall accept and consider all applications for review of local government residential amendments submitted to the council in a proper manner.

The council may refer a proposed local government residential amendment to one of the council standing committees for review and comment prior to council action in accordance with RCW 19.27.074.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-035, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-035, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-037 Preapproved local government residential amendments.** Any local government residential amendment, that the council determines to be appropriate for adoption by other local governments, may be designated as a preapproved local government residential amendment.

A preapproved local government residential amendment may be adopted by any local government upon notification of the council.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-037, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-040 Reconsideration.** (1) When the council approves, denies or modifies a local amendment to the building code, any party with written or oral testimony to the council related to the amendment on the record may file a petition for reconsideration. The petition must be received by the Washington State Building Code Council, 1500 Jefferson Avenue S.E., P.O. Box 41449, Olympia, Washington 98504-1449, within twenty calendar days of the council action on the amendment. The petition must give specific reasons for why the council should reconsider the amendment for approval or denial.

(2) Within sixty calendar days of receipt of a timely petition for reconsideration, the council shall in writing:

(a) Grant the petition for reconsideration;

(b) Deny the petition for reconsideration, giving reasons for the denial; or

(c) Request additional information and extend the time period for not more than thirty calendar days to either grant or deny the petition for reconsideration.

(3) The council's denial of a local government amendment, or the council denial of a petition for reconsideration under this section, is subject to judicial review under chapter 34.05 RCW.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and 19.27.074. WSR 21-01-049, § 51-04-040, filed 12/8/20, effective 1/8/21. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-040, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074 and 19.27.035. WSR 17-03-123, § 51-04-040, filed 1/18/17, effective 2/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.074. WSR 16-01-042, § 51-04-040, filed 12/9/15, effective 1/9/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-040, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-040, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 02-01-113, § 51-04-040, filed 12/18/01, effective 7/1/02. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-040, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-050 Ex parte communications.** All written communications related to council business received by council members shall be forwarded to staff for inclusion in the public record.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-050, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-050, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]

**WAC 51-04-060 Opinions.** RCW 19.27.031 grants the council authority to render opinions relating to the building code at the request of a local code official.

For the purposes of this section, the term "code official" means the local or state official, or their designee, responsible for implementation and enforcement of the specific code provision on which the opinion is requested.

At the request of a code official, the council will issue opinions relating to the codes adopted under chapters 19.27, 19.27A, and 70.92 RCW, and council amendments to the model codes. At the request of a local code official, the council may issue opinions on the applicability of WAC 51-04-030 to a local government ordinance regulating construction.

Council related opinions may be developed and approved by a standing committee of the council.

Opinions approved by a standing committee may be reviewed and modified by the council.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-060, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035, 19.27.074 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 07-15-043, § 51-04-060, filed 7/13/07, effective 8/13/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 04-01-107, § 51-04-060, filed 12/17/03, effective 7/1/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and 19.27.074. WSR 98-24-077, § 51-04-060, filed 12/1/98, effective 7/1/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.035 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 94-05-058, § 51-04-060, filed 2/10/94, effective 3/13/94. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-060, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]



**WAC 51-04-070 Council mailing address.** All requests for information, documentation, etc., should be submitted to:

Washington State Building Code Council  
1500 Jefferson Avenue S.E.  
P.O. Box 41449  
Olympia, Washington 98504-1449  
Phone: 360-407-9255  
[www.sbcc.wa.gov](http://www.sbcc.wa.gov)

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 19-24-078, § 51-04-070, filed 12/2/19, effective 1/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.074. WSR 16-01-042, § 51-04-070, filed 12/9/15, effective 1/9/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.190, 19.27.020, and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 05-23-104, § 51-04-070, filed 11/17/05, effective 1/1/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.074. WSR 98-02-048, § 51-04-070, filed 1/5/98, effective 7/1/98. Statutory Authority: Chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW and 1989 c 348. WSR 90-02-108, § 51-04-070, filed 1/3/90, effective 2/3/90.]