Preface

The following preface is reprinted from the model National Fire Code of Canada (NFC), on which the British Columbia Fire Code (BCFC) is substantially based. As such, this information also pertains to the BCFC. Material that is not relevant to the BCFC has been deleted; minor BCFC-specific edits within the text have been made. Additional information only relevant to the BCFC has been included in text boxes within the document.

The National Fire Code of Canada 2015, together with the National Building Code of Canada 2015, the National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings 2015 and the National Plumbing Code of Canada 2015, is an objective-based National Model Code that can be adopted by provincial and territorial governments. Codes Canada[(1)] are developed by the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC).

In Canada, provincial and territorial governments have the authority to enact legislation that regulates the following activities within their jurisdictions:

- activities related to the construction, use or demolition of buildings and facilities
- the condition of specific elements of buildings and facilities
- the design or construction of specific elements of facilities related to certain hazards
- protection measures for the current or intended use of buildings

This legislation may include the adoption of the National Fire Code (NFC) without change or with modifications to suit local needs, and the enactment of other laws and regulations related to these activities, including the requirements for professional involvement.

In British Columbia, the National Building Code of Canada (NBC), together with the National Plumbing Code of Canada (NPC), are adopted, including any variations considered necessary, as Book I (General) and Book II (Plumbing Systems) of the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC), pursuant to the Building Act.

The National Fire Code of Canada is adopted, including any variations considered necessary, as the British Columbia Fire Code, pursuant to the Fire Services Act.

The National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings (NECB) is adopted by reference from Book I (General) of the British Columbia Building Code.

The NFC is a model code in the sense that it helps promote consistency among provincial and territorial fire codes. Persons involved in the operation of buildings or facilities should consult the provincial or territorial government concerned to find out which fire code is applicable.

This edition of the NFC succeeds the 2010 edition.

This edition of the BCFC succeeds the 2012 edition.

Code Development

Development of Codes Canada

The Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) is responsible for the content of the National Model Codes. The CCBFC is an independent body made up of volunteers from across the country and from all facets of the code-user community. Members of the CCBFC and its standing committees include builders, engineers, skilled trade workers, architects, building owners, building operators, fire and building officials, manufacturers and representatives of general interests.

The CCBFC is advised on scope, policy and technical issues pertaining to the Codes by the Provincial/Territorial Policy Advisory Committee on Codes (PTPACC), which is a committee of senior representatives from provincial/territorial ministries responsible for the regulation of buildings, fire safety and plumbing in their jurisdictions. The PTPACC was created by the provinces and territories, with provision of guidance to the CCBFC as one of its main functions. Through the PTPACC and its subcommittees on building, fire and plumbing regulation, the provinces and territories are engaged in every phase of the model Code development process.

Codes Canada (formerly named the Canadian Codes Centre) of the National Research Council (NRC) provides technical and administrative support to the CCBFC and its standing committees. NRC publishes Codes Canada and periodic revisions to the Codes to address pressing issues.

Similar to the codes themselves, such periodic revisions do not have legal effect until adopted into law by the Province of British Columbia.

The broader code-user community also makes a significant contribution to the model Code development process by submitting requests for changes or additions to the Codes and by commenting on the proposed changes during the public reviews that precede each new edition.

The CCBFC takes into consideration the advice received from the provinces and territories as well as code users' comments at each stage of Code development. The scope and content of Codes Canada are determined on a consensus basis, which involves the review of technical, policy and practical concerns and debate on the implications of these concerns.

More information on the Code development process is available on NRC's Web site. Printed copies of this information may also be requested from the Secretary of the CCBFC, whose address is provided at the end of this Preface.

National Fire Code of Canada 2015

The National Fire Code (NFC) sets out technical provisions regulating

- activities related to the construction, use or demolition of buildings and facilities
- the condition of specific elements of buildings and facilities
- the design or construction of specific elements of facilities related to certain hazards
- protection measures for the current or intended use of buildings

The NFC establishes requirements to address the following three objectives, which are fully described in Division A of the Code:

- safety
- health
- fire protection of buildings and facilities

Code provisions do not necessarily address all the characteristics of buildings and facilities that might be considered to have a bearing on the Code's objectives. Through the extensive consensus process used to develop and maintain Codes Canada (see the section entitled Development of Codes Canada), the code-user community has decided which characteristics should be regulated through the NFC.

Because the NFC is a model code, its requirements can be considered as the minimum acceptable measures required to adequately achieve the above-listed objectives, as recommended by the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes. They become minimum acceptable requirements once they are adopted and passed into law or regulation by an authority having jurisdiction: i.e., the requirements represent the minimum level of performance required to achieve the objectives that is acceptable to the adopting authority.

Fire code users are also involved in the development of the NFC and they help determine the content. The Code development process is described in the section entitled Development of Codes Canada.

The NFC is a model code which, when adopted or adapted by a province or territory, becomes a regulation. It is not a textbook on the operation, maintenance, protection, design or construction of buildings and facilities. Executing these activities in a technically sound manner depends upon many factors beyond simple compliance with fire regulations. Such factors include the availability of knowledgeable practitioners who have received appropriate education, training and experience and who have some degree of familiarity with the principles of good practice and experience using textbooks, reference manuals and technical guides.

The NFC does not list acceptable proprietary products. It establishes the criteria that materials, products and assemblies must meet. Some of these criteria are explicitly stated in the NFC while others are incorporated by reference to material or product standards published by standards development organizations. Only those portions of the standards related to the objectives of this Code are mandatory parts of the NFC.

Relationship between the National Building Code and the National Fire Code

The National Building Code (NBC) and National Fire Code (NFC) each contain provisions that deal with the safety of persons in buildings in the event of a fire and the protection of buildings from the effects of fire.(2) (SEE NOTE) These two National Model Codes are developed as complementary and coordinated documents to minimize the possibility of their containing conflicting provisions. It is expected that buildings comply with both the NBC and the NFC. The NBC generally applies at the time of construction and reconstruction while the NFC applies to the operation and maintenance of the fire-related features of buildings in use.

The scope of each of these Codes with respect to fire safety and fire protection can be summarized as follows:

> The National Building Code covers the fire safety and fire protection features that are required to be incorporated in a building at the time of its original construction. Building codes typically no longer apply once a building is occupied, unless the building is undergoing alteration or change of use, or being demolished.

The National Fire Code includes provisions for:

- the on-going maintenance and use of the fire safety and fire protection features incorporated in buildings
- the conduct of activities that might cause fire hazards in and around buildings
- limitations on hazardous contents in and around buildings
- the establishment of fire safety plans
- fire safety at construction and demolition sites

In addition, the NFC contains provisions regarding fire safety and fire protection features that must be added to existing buildings when certain hazardous activities or processes are introduced in these buildings.

Some of the NFC's provisions are not duplicated directly in the NBC but are in fact adopted through cross-references to the NFC. Thus, some NFC provisions may apply to original construction, alterations, or changes in use.

Code Requirements

Every NFC requirement must address at least one of the Code's three stated objectives, namely:

- safety
- health
- fire protection of buildings and facilities

In dealing with proposed changes or additions to any Codes Canada, the CCBFC considers many issues such as the following:

- Does the proposed requirement provide the minimum level of performance – and no more than the minimum – needed to achieve the Code's objectives?
- Will persons responsible for Code compliance be able to act on or implement the requirement using commonly accepted practices?
- Will enforcement agencies be able to enforce the requirement?
- Are the costs of implementing the requirement justifiable?
- Have the potential policy implications of the requirement been identified and addressed?
- Is there broad consensus on this requirement among Code users as well as among provincial and territorial governments?

Guidelines for requesting changes to the NFC are available on NRC's Web site. Printed copies of the guidelines may also be requested from the Secretary of the CCBFC, whose address is provided at the end of this Preface.

Objective-Based Code Format

The National Fire Code (NFC) was published in an objective-based code format for the first time in 2005. This was the result of ten years of work on an initiative that arose out of the strategic plan adopted by the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) in 1995.

The 2006 BCBC (including plumbing services as Part 7) and the 2006 BCFC were the first objective-based codes adopted by the Province of British Columbia.

The NFC comprises three Divisions:

- Division A, which defines the scope of the Code and contains the objectives, the functional statements and the conditions necessary to achieve compliance;
- Division B, which contains acceptable solutions (commonly referred to as "technical requirements") deemed to satisfy the objectives and functional statements listed in Division A; and
- Division C, which contains administrative provisions.

A more complete description of this division-based structure is included in the section entitled Structure of Objective-Based Codes.

Each requirement in Division B is linked to three types of information:

- objectives (such as safety or health), which individual requirements help to address,
- functional statements (statements on the functions of the building or facility that a particular requirement helps to achieve), and
- intent statements (detailed statements on the specific intent of the provision).

Objectives

The NFC's objectives are fully defined in Section 2.2. of Division A. Most top-level objectives have two levels of sub-objectives.

The objectives describe, in very broad terms, the overall goals that the NFC's requirements are intended to achieve. They serve to define the boundaries of the subject areas the Code addresses. However, the Code does not deal with all the issues that might be considered to fall within those boundaries.

The objectives describe undesirable situations and their consequences, which the Code aims to avoid occurring in buildings and facilities. The wording of most of the definitions of the objectives includes two key phrases: "limit the probability" and "unacceptable risk." The phrase "limit the probability" is used to acknowledge that the NFC cannot entirely prevent those undesirable situations from happening. The phrase "unacceptable risk" acknowledges that the NFC cannot eliminate all risk: the "acceptable risk" is the risk remaining once compliance with the Code has been achieved.

The objectives are entirely qualitative and are not intended to be used on their own in determining compliance with the Code.

The objectives attributed to the requirements or portions of requirements in Division B are listed in a table following the provisions in each Part.

Objectives have also been attributed to any requirements specific to British Columbia.

Functional Statements

The NFC's functional statements are defined in Section 3.2. of Division A.

The functional statements are more detailed than the objectives: they describe conditions in the building or facility that help satisfy the objectives. The functional statements and the objectives are interconnected: there may be several functional statements related to any one objective and a given functional statement may describe a function of the building or facility that serves to achieve more than one objective.

Like objectives, functional statements are entirely qualitative and are not intended to be used on their own in determining compliance with the Code.

The functional statements attributed to requirements or portions of requirements in Division B are listed in a table following the provisions in each Part.

Functional Statements have also been attributed to any requirements specific to British Columbia.

Intent Statements

Intent statements explain, in plain language, the basic thinking behind each Code provision contained in Division B. Intent statements, each of which is unique to the provision with which it is associated, explain how requirements help to achieve their attributed objectives and functional statements. Like the objectives, the intent statements are expressed in terms of risk avoidance and expected performance. They offer insight into the views of the responsible standing committees on what the Code provisions are intended to achieve.

The intent statements serve explanatory purposes only and do not form an integral part of the Code provisions: as such, they are similar in function to the explanatory notes at the end of each Part. Due to the sheer volume of intent statements – thousands for the NFC alone – they are only available as part of an online Code subscription and as a separate electronic document entitled "Supplement to the NFC 2015: Intent Statements," which is posted on NRC's Web site.

"Supplement to the NBC 2015: Intent Statements" is not available at the time of printing of this Code.

Intent statements have not been attributed to any requirements specific to British Columbia.

All this additional information – objectives, functional statements and intent statements – is intended to facilitate the implementation of the Code in the following ways:

- **Clarity of intent:** The objectives, functional statements and intent statements linked to a Code requirement clarify the reasoning behind that requirement and facilitate understanding of what must be done to satisfy that requirement. This added information may also help avoid disputes between practitioners and officials over these types of issues.
- **Flexibility:** The additional information allows for flexibility in Code compliance. A person seeking to propose a new method or material not described or covered in the Code will be able to use the added information to understand the expected level of performance that their alternative solution must achieve to satisfy the Code.

Structure of Objective-Based Codes

The National Fire Code (NFC) is organized into three Divisions.

Division A: Compliance, Objectives and Functional Statements

Division A defines the scope of the NFC and presents the objectives that the Code addresses and the functions the building or facility must perform to help to satisfy those objectives.

Division A cannot be used on its own as a basis for operating a building or facility, or for evaluating a building's or facility's compliance with the Code.

Division B: Acceptable Solutions

The term "acceptable solutions" refers to the technical provisions contained in the Code. It reflects the principle that fire codes establish an acceptable level of risk or performance and underlines the fact that a code cannot describe all possible valid Code compliance options. The term provokes the question "To whom are these solutions considered acceptable?" Acceptable solutions represent the minimum level of performance that will satisfy the NFC's objectives and that is acceptable to an authority that adopts the NFC into law or regulation.

The requirements in Division B – the acceptable solutions – are linked to at least one objective and functional statement found in Division A. These linkages play an important role in allowing objective-based codes to accommodate innovation.

It is expected that the majority of Code users will primarily follow the acceptable solutions presented in Division B and that they will consult Division A only when seeking clarification on the application of Division B's requirements to a particular situation, when considering an alternative solution, or to read the definition of selected terms in the context of the NFC.

Division C: Administrative Provisions

Division C contains the administrative provisions relating to the application of the Code. Many provinces and territories establish their own administrative provisions upon adopting or adapting the NFC; having all the administrative provisions in one Division facilitates their customization to suit jurisdictional needs.

Relationship between Division A and Division B

Sentence 1.2.1.1.(1) of Division A is a very important sentence: it is a precise statement of the relationship between Divisions A and B and is central to the concept of objective-based codes.

1) Compliance with this Code shall be achieved by

a) complying with the applicable acceptable solutions in Division B (see Note A-1.2.1.1.(1)(a)), or

b) using alternative solutions that will achieve at least the minimum level of performance required by Division B in the areas defined by the objectives and functional statements attributed to the applicable acceptable solutions (see Note A-1.2.1.1.(1)(b)).

See Article 1.2.1.1. of the BCFC, which differs from above. Additional requirements apply in British Columbia.

Clause (a) makes it clear that the acceptable solutions in Division B are automatically deemed to satisfy the linked objectives and functional statements of Division A.

Clause (b) makes it clear that alternative solutions can be used in lieu of compliance with the acceptable solutions. However, to do something different from the acceptable solutions described in Division B, a proponent must show that their proposed alternative solution will perform at least as well as the acceptable solution(s) it is replacing. The objectives and functional statements attributed to the acceptable solution(s) identify the areas of performance where this equivalence must be demonstrated.

Additional Information

New Structure

This edition of the NFC has been restructured to align it with the restructuring of the National Building Code 2015.

The BCBC and BCFC have been restructured in the same way as the NBC and NFC.

Numbering System

A consistent numbering system has been used throughout Codes Canada. The first number indicates the Part of the Code; the second, the Section in the Part; the third, the Subsection; and the fourth, the Article in the Subsection. The detailed provisions are found at the Sentence level (indicated by numbers in brackets), and Sentences may be broken down into Clauses and Subclauses. This structure is illustrated as follows:

3	Part
3.5.	Section
3.5.2.	Subsection
3.5.2.1.	Article
3.5.2.1.(2)	Sentence
3.5.2.1.(2)(a)	Clause
3.5.2.1.(2)(a)(i)	Subclause

Change Indication

Where a technical change or addition has been made relative to the 2010 edition, a vertical line has been added in the margin next to the affected provision to indicate the approximate location of new or modified content. No change indication is provided for renumbered or deleted content.

In addition to the above noted vertical lines, which indicate a change to the NFC that has been included in the BCFC, further technical changes or additions relative to the 2012 edition of the BCFC are identified. These changes are underlined, wherever practical. The vertical lines and underlining are for convenience only and have no legal effect. No change indication is provided for renumbered or deleted provisions.

The term "reserved" is included in place of certain deleted Codes Canada model content which has not been adopted. The term "reserved" is generally used so that the numbering structure of the BC Codes is aligned with the model National Codes, easing comparability and possible future harmonization.

Meaning of the words "and" and "or" between the Clauses and Subclauses of a Sentence

Multiple Clauses and Subclauses are connected by the word "and" or "or" at the end of the second last Clause or Subclause in the series. Although this connecting word appears only once, it is meant to apply to all the preceding Clauses or Subclauses within that series.

For example, in a series of five Clauses – a) to e) – in a Code Sentence, the appearance of the word "and" at the end of Clause d) means that all Clauses in the Sentence are connected to each other with the word "and." Similarly, in a series of five Clauses – a) to e) – in a Code Sentence, the appearance of the word "or" at the end of Clause d) means that all Clauses in the Sentence are connected to each other with the word "or."

In all cases, it is important to note that a Clause (and its Subclauses, if any) must always be read in conjunction with its introductory text appearing at the beginning of the Sentence.

Metric Conversion

All values in the NFC are given in metric units. A conversion table of imperial equivalents for the most common units used in building design and construction is located at the end of the Code.

Commercial Rights to Reproduce the National Fire Code

Contact Information

The CCBFC welcomes comments and suggestions for improvements to the National Fire Code. Persons interested in requesting a change to an NFC provision should refer to the guidelines available on NRC's Web site.

To submit comments or suggestions or to request printed copies of Internet material referred to in this Preface, contact:

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Relationship of the NFC to Standards Development and Conformity Assessment

The development of many provisions in the National Fire Code (NFC) and the assessment of conformity to those provisions are supported by several of the member organizations of Canada's National Standards System (NSS).

The NSS is a federation of accredited organizations concerned with standards development, certification, testing, inspection, personnel and management systems registration that is established under the auspices of the Standards Council of Canada Act. Activities of the NSS are coordinated by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), which has accredited 8 standards development organizations, 36 certification organizations, 21 registration organizations, and 344 calibration and testing laboratories.

The SCC is a federal non-profit Crown corporation responsible for the coordination of voluntary standardization in Canada. It also has responsibilities for Canada's activities in voluntary international standardization.

Canadian Standards

The NFC contains many references to standards published by accredited standards development organizations in Canada. As part of the accreditation requirements, these organizations adhere to the principles of consensus. This generally means substantial majority agreement of a committee comprising a balance of producer, user and general interest members, and the consideration of all negative comments. The organizations also have formal procedures for the second-level review of the technical preparation and balloting of standards prepared under their auspices. (The Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) follows these same principles of consensus in the operation of its Code development process.)

The following organizations are accredited as standards development organizations in Canada:

- American Society for Testing and Materials International (ASTM)
- Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ)
- Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB)
- Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Underwriters' Laboratories (UL)
- ULC Standards (ULC)

Table 1.3.1.2. of Division B lists the standards referenced in the NFC. Standards proposed to be referenced in the NFC are reviewed to ensure their content is compatible with the Code. Thereafter, referenced standards are reviewed as needed during each Code cycle. Standards development organizations are asked to provide information on any changes in the status of their standards referenced in the NFC – withdrawals, amendments, new editions, etc. This information is passed on to the CCBFC, its standing committees, the provinces and territories, and interested stakeholders on particular issues, all of whom are given the opportunity to identify any problems associated with the changes. These bodies do not necessarily review in detail the revised standards; rather, the approach relies on the consensus process involved in the maintenance of the standards and on the extensive knowledge and backgrounds of committee members, provincial or territorial staff, NRC staff, and consulted stakeholders to identify changes in the standards that might create problems in the Code.

Non-Canadian Standards

A number of subject areas for which the Canadian standards development organizations have not developed standards are covered in the NFC. In these cases, the Code often references standards developed by organizations in other countries, such as the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). These standards are developed using processes that may differ from those used by the Canadian standards development organizations; nevertheless, these standards have been reviewed by the relevant standing committees and found to be acceptable.

Conformity Assessment

The NFC establishes minimum measures, either within its own text or that of referenced standards. However, the NFC does not deal with the question of who is responsible for assessing conformity to the measures or how those with this responsibility might carry it out. This responsibility is usually established by the governing legislation of the adopting provinces or territories. Provincial or territorial authorities should be consulted to determine who is responsible for conformity assessment within their jurisdiction.

Those persons responsible for ensuring that a material, appliance, system or equipment meets the requirements of this Code have several means available to assist them. These means vary from on-site inspection to the use of certification services provided by accredited third-party organizations. Test reports or mill certificates provided by manufacturers or suppliers can also assist in the acceptance of products. Engineering reports may be required for more complex products.

Testing

The accreditation programs of the SCC include many organizations accredited for testing and calibration that are capable of reliably testing building products to specified standards. The test results produced by these organizations can be used in the evaluation, qualification and certification of building products to Code provisions. The SCC's Web site (www.scc.ca) lists accredited certification bodies and allows users to search the scope of accreditation for each of these organizations.

Certification

Certification is the confirmation by an independent organization that a product or service meets a requirement. Certification of a product, process, or system entails physical examination, testing as specified in the appropriate standards, plant examination, and follow-up unannounced plant inspections. This procedure leads to the issuing of a formal assurance or declaration, by means of a certification mark or certificate, that the product, process or system is in full conformity with specified provisions.

In some cases, a product for which no standard exists can be certified using procedures and criteria developed by the accredited certifying organization and specifically designed to measure the performance of that product. Certification bodies publish lists of certified products and companies.

Registration

Quality Registration Organizations assess a company's conformance to quality assurance standards like the International Organization for Standardization ISO 9000.

Evaluation

An evaluation is a written opinion by an independent professional organization that a product will perform its intended function in a building. An evaluation is very often done to determine the ability of an innovative product, for which no standards exist, to satisfy the intent of a Code requirement. Follow-up plant inspections are not normally part of the evaluation process. Several organizations, including the Canadian Construction Materials Centre (CCMC), offer such evaluation services.

Qualification

The qualification of products also evaluates the ability of a product to perform its intended function by verifying that it meets the requirements of a standard. Qualification normally includes some follow-up plant inspection. Some organizations publish lists of qualified products that meet the specified requirements. Some organizations qualify manufacturing and/or testing facilities for products for compliance with the Code and relevant standards.

Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes and Standing Committees

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(1) Chair term commenced during the preparation of the 2015 Code.
(2) Chair term ended during the preparation of the 2015 Code.