BUILDING CODES TOOLKIT

Glossary

The terms in this glossary were defined using FEMA publications and are meant as a means of clarifying definitions as they are used throughout this toolkit.

Addition: An increase in the aggregate floor area, height, or number of stories of a structure.

Alteration: Any construction or renovation to an existing structure other than an addition.

Architect: An architect initiates the building design and determines a number of issues relating to a building's size and three-dimensional shape, the form and location of the structural elements, and the nature and location of nonstructural components that may affect a structure's performance.

Building Code: Officially adopted comprehensive specifications regulating building construction, materials, and performance to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

Building Inspector: The building inspector verifies whether construction is proceeding according to the approved plans and the conditions of the permit.

For more detailed information, please see the *Basic Checklist to Acquire a Building Permit*.

Building Official / Code Official: Officer or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of the code, or a duly authorized representative, such as a building, zoning, planning, or floodplain management official.

Building Permit: A building permit gives you legal permission to start construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

Certificate of Completion: A document issued by the local building department verifying that a construction project was completed in accordance with building codes, rules, and regulations.

Certificate of Occupancy: A document issued by the local building department certifying a building or structure's compliance with applicable building codes and other laws, and indicates it to be in a condition suitable for occupancy.

Certificate of Zoning Compliance: A document issued by the Administrator certifying compliance with all terms of an approved Zoning Compliance Permit, and authorizing occupancy of a building, structure or land.

Community: A political entity that has the authority to adopt and enforce laws and ordinances for the area under its jurisdiction. In most cases, the community is an incorporated town, city, township, village, or unincorporated area of a county; however, each State defines its own political subdivisions and forms of government.

Demolition: Demolition is the tearing-down of buildings and other structures.

Design Professional: A State-licensed architect or engineer.

Engineer: An engineer is a person trained and experienced in the profession of engineering; a person licensed to practice the profession by the authority in the area. Among other duties, engineers are often tasked with calculating the loads of a proposed structure (e.g. wind and earthquake forces), fitting the structure to the architecture, and determining the structural systems that will be used.

> **Civil Engineer**: An engineer trained in the design of static structures such as buildings, roads, tunnels, and bridges and the control of water and its contaminants.

Engineering: Engineering is the application of science and mathematics by which the properties of matter and the sources of energy in nature are made useful to people.

> **Structural Engineering**: Civil engineering sub-discipline responsible for the selection, design calculations, drawing, and specifications of a building frame.
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> **Geotechnical Engineering**: Civil engineering sub-discipline that applies knowledge of soil and rick mechanics to engineering problems.

Floodplain Manager: A floodplain manager is the principal community administrator in the daily implementation of a community's flood loss reduction activities including enforcing the community's flood damage prevention ordinance, updating flood maps, plans, and policies of the community, and any of the activities related to administration of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

General Contractor: A general contractor is one who undertakes responsibility for the performance of construction work, including the provision of labor and materials, in accordance with plans and specifications and under a contract specifying cost and schedule for the completion of work; the person or organization responsible for performing the work, and identified as such in the owner – contractor agreement. When planning a remodel or rebuild, it is strongly recommended that you seek the assistance of a licensed professional contractor rather than attempting to complete the project on your own.

For more detailed information, please see the *Checklist of Questions to Ask Your General Contractor*.

Green Project: A green construction project is the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a structure's life cycle.

Mitigation: Techniques that form the foundation for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

Modular Home: A structure, transportable in one or more sections, built on a permanent chassis and designed for use with or without a permanent foundation when attached to the required utilities. Does not include recreational vehicles.

New Construction: New construction is the building of a new structure or structures.

Property: Any asset, real or personal; an ownership interest.

Property Owner: A property owner is one who has the legal right or title to a piece of property. Property owners have the legal right to rent, sell, or alter their property.

Rehabilitation of Historic Properties: Work on a building that is on the National Register of Historic Places or that has been designated as historic by federally certified state or local historic preservation offices (or that is eligible for such designation) may be excluded from calculations of value of work used to determine substantial damage and substantial improvement requirements, provided such work does not cause the building to lose its historic designation.

Relocation: The moving of a structure to a location that is less prone to flooding and flood-related hazards such as erosion.

Retrofit: Any change or combination of adjustments made to an existing structure intended to reduce or eliminate damage to that structure from flooding, erosion, high winds, earthquakes, or other hazards.

Resilience: The Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-8: National Preparedness defines the term "resilience" as the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies.

Risk: Potential losses associated with a hazard, defined in terms of expected probability and frequency, exposure, and consequences. Risk is associated with three factors: threat, vulnerability, and consequence.

Threat: The probability that an even of a given recurrence interval will affect the building within a specified period. See Risk.

Utility Certificate: Depending on the level of construction, there is often a separate certification granted to allow utility hookups. The Utility Certificate allows a property owner to connect to local utility sources and is usually issued just prior to a certificate of occupancy.