

Building and Codes Department

Memorandum

Date: 10/15/2008
To: All Interested Parties
From: Steve Mills
RE: Storm Shelter and/or Safe Room Policy

Following the tornado of April 7, 2006 the City of Hendersonville received numerous questions and inquiries regarding our policies with respect to private storm shelters and/or safe rooms. Based on the limited information that was available at that time the City of Hendersonville issued an initial policy that drew on the expertise of the *National Storm Shelter Association (NSSA)* and the *Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA)*. Since that time the *International Code Council (ICC)*, along with NSSA and FEMA, has created a comprehensive and current set of guidelines for the construction and design of storm shelters and/or safe rooms. This document, **ICC 500-2008 ICC/NSSA Standard For The Design And Construction Of Storm Shelters**, significantly increases the level of public safety to those who utilize storm shelters and/or safe rooms in the event of a severe storm. Since this document is meant to be simply a standard and not a code, the Department of Building & Codes is therefore issuing this amended Storm Shelter Policy. The following provisions are to be considered the policy of the City of Hendersonville regarding the construction, design and performance of storm shelters and/or safe rooms:

- All storm shelters intended for use by the general public shall be designed and constructed in accordance with *ICC 500-2008 ICC/NSSA Standard For The Design And Construction Of Storm Shelters*. In addition, all other applicable regulations and requirements of the City of Hendersonville for such construction shall apply unless otherwise stated.
- All private storm shelters and safe rooms are to comply with *ICC 500-2008 ICC/NSSA Standard For The Design And Construction Of Storm Shelters*. *Section 102 of that standard* permits compliance alternatives provided equivalency is demonstrated and subsequently approved by the City of Hendersonville.
- All storm shelters, whether located above or below ground, must comply with applicable provisions of the Hendersonville Zoning Ordinance 1985-8 and any subsequent amendments. Underground shelters must comply with Section 3-306.3.
- Safe rooms used for other uses during non-storm times must comply with all applicable criteria of - The International Residential Code (IRC), the International Building Code (IBC); the National Electrical Code (NEC); and ICC 500-2008

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- Dedicated safe rooms must comply with ICC 500-2008. Compliance with the IBC, IRC or NEC will only apply if applicable.
- Storm shelters and dedicated safe rooms are not considered to be habitable space, whether or not they are located above or below ground. Non-dedicated storm shelters and safe rooms are to be considered habitable space.
- Permits will not be required for any underground dedicated storm shelters, regardless of their size. Above ground storm shelters not exceeding 200 square feet in area will not be required to obtain a building permit, but must still comply with applicable building and zoning requirements. All safe rooms will be required to obtain a building permit.

This policy and referenced provisions of ICC 500-2008 are not designed to unnecessarily restrict anyone who has chosen to protect their family's life safety by utilizing a storm shelter or safe room in the event of another severe storm occurrence. It is however intended to insure that each owner or user ends up with an adequately designed and constructed storm shelter or safe room that will truly protect them when the time comes. Compliance with these minimum standards will also provide a property owner a better opportunity to be considered for a grant through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. If there are additional questions I can be contacted at (615) 822-3802 or smills@hvilletn.org.