



REQUEST FOR INTERPRETATIONS, ALTERNATE METHODS OR MODIFICATIONS

The Building Official has authority under the code to make interpretations, approve alternate methods requests, and to allow modifications of the building code based on practical difficulties. The Building Official *cannot* grant waivers to or variances from the code. All requests must be in writing. The following information should be provided, if pertinent, for each building and each issue in the written request.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

ALL request letters must include the following information:

- Nature of the request (alternate method, interpretation, modification)
- Project address and suite number
- City permit project number
- Use or occupancy group
- Type of construction
- Building square footage
- Pertinent dimensions
- Specific code requirement
- Applicable code section
- Description of the problem
- Details of the proposed solution

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH TYPE OF REQUEST

The following specific information should also be included based on the type of request.

1. **Code Interpretations (Section 104.1, 2012 IBC)** - Code interpretations are based on the intent of the code.
 - Describe how the interpretation would apply to the particular set of circumstances, and
 - Describe the alternative interpretations and their consequences
2. **Alternate Methods (Section 104.11, 2012 IBC)** - A request to use an alternate method of construction or design to substitute for code requirements must include details that show the proposed method is equivalent to that prescribed in terms of quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability and safety.
 - Describe the proposed alternate method to be substituted, and
 - Demonstrate how it is equivalent to the prescribed code requirement
3. **Modification to Existing Buildings Due to Practical Difficulties (Section 104.10, 2012 IBC)** - A request for a code modification based on practical difficulties in existing buildings must include the reason that a particular provision creates an impractical situation, or that it makes no sense when applied in a particular circumstance.
 - Describe why the code requirement creates a practical difficulty, and
 - Demonstrate that the modification will not lessen any fire-protection requirements or any degree of structural integrity.

INFORMATION ABOUT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

- Plans and plan details required for alternate method or interpretation requests shall be submitted as scalable documents, sizes 11"x 17" minimum to 24"x 36" maximum.
- Electronic copies shall be in .pdf format.

FEES

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| Standard Request - Requires minimal amount of research or consultation..... | \$ 71.93 |
| Moderate Request - Requires a moderate amount of research or consultation (Typically 2 – 4 hours)..... | \$ 138.34 |
| Extensive Request - Requires extensive research, documentation and data collection. (Up to 4 Hours)..... | \$ 581.07 |
| <i>Plus each additional hour exceeding 4 hours.....</i> | <i>\$ 138.34</i> |

CONTACT INFORMATION

Requests may be submitted via email at michael.howard@houston.tx.gov, fax to 832-395-9614, or in person at 1002 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor, Houston, TX 77002

Address Letters to: Earl N. Greer, Interim Building Official, P. O. Box 2688, Houston, TX 77252-2688



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(Supplemental Information Sheet)

The following are some of the most common types of requests. Included are specific requirements needed in addition to the general requirements.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

CODE OF RECORD REQUEST

(Sections 102.6, 116.1, Ch.34, and Appendix L of the 2012 IBC)

Alternate Method approval request may be authorized for use of the code of record for an existing building where compliance with the provision of *Sections 102.6.1 and Appendix L* of the Houston adopted Building Code (2012) can demonstrate the existing use and occupancy and the building is not unsafe pursuant to the code provisions of Section 116. All code of record requests must include the request letter with the information specified above and include the following specific documentation:

- A photocopy of the Code of Record submittal package that was provided to the Houston Fire Department (HFD) for review and approval, including the:
 - Harris County Real Property Account Information
 - Copy of Certificate of Occupancy
 - Site Access Plan Drawn to Scale
 - High-Pile Plan showing storage rack layout and including building cross section that clearly shows height of racks in relation to the finish floor and roof construction, location of required roof vents, exit doors and HFD access doors, and
- A copy of the HFD stamped approval letter approving the Code of Record for the existing building.

OCCUPANT LOAD (OL) REDUCTION REQUEST

Educational Occupancies - For those regulated by Texas Education Agency (TEA),

- Form CE_1131 Request for Reduced Occupant Load /Educational.

Daycare Occupancies

- For daycares, if the requested reduction is based on State Law, include related licensing applications.

Other Occupancies

- Floor Plan – Include a building plan layout identifying the seating plan with all fixed seats & pews, or fixed machines (if applicable) clearly labeled, and showing the means of egress.
- Occupant Load Calculations – Include OL calculations showing the proposed OL as well as the OL calculations based on Table 1004.1.2 of the IBC 2012.