

Notice for Property Owners, Contractors, and Design Professionals Regarding Regulations on Substantial Improvement in the Flood Hazard Areas

[This example is based on the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) minimum requirements.]

TO: Property Owners, Contractors, and Design Professionals

FROM: R. Clem Malot, Building Code Official, PMCA 380 Wayne Avenue, Chambersburg, Pa. 17201

SUBJECT: Notice for Work on Existing Buildings in Special Flood Hazard Areas Substantial Improvement / Substantial Damage Worksheets

The *Community's* floodplain management regulations and codes specify that all new buildings to be constructed in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) (regulated floodplains) are required to have their lowest floors elevated to or above the base flood elevation (BFE). The regulations also specify that **substantial improvement** of existing buildings (remodeling, rehabilitation, improvement, or addition) or buildings that have sustained **substantial damage** must be brought into compliance with the requirements for new construction. Please note that a building may be substantially damaged by any cause, including fire, flood, high wind, seismic activity, land movement, or neglect. It is important to note that all costs to repair a substantially damaged building to its pre-damage condition must be identified. There are several aspects that must be addressed to achieve compliance with the floodplain management requirements. The requirements depend on several factors, including the flood zone at your property. The most significant compliance requirement is that the lowest floor, as defined in the regulations/code, must be elevated to or above the BFE. Please plan to meet with this department to review your proposed project, to go over the requirements, and to discuss how to bring your building into compliance.

Regulations define these terms:

Substantial damage means damage of any origin sustained by a structure whereby the cost of restoring the structure to its before damaged condition would equal or exceed 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the damage occurred.

Substantial improvement means any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the "start of construction" of the improvement. This term includes structures that have incurred "substantial damage," regardless of the actual repair work performed. The term does not, however, include either:

- (1) Any project for improvement of a structure to correct existing violations of State or local health, sanitary, or safety code specifications that have been identified by the local code enforcement official and that are the minimum necessary to assure safe living conditions or
- (2) Any alteration of a "historic structure," provided that the alteration will not preclude the structure's continued designation as a "historic structure."

To make the substantial improvement determination or the substantial damage determination, we compare the cost of the proposed improvement or repairs to the market value of the building (excluding land, accessory structures, and landscaping). If the resulting ratio equals or exceeds 50 percent, the existing building must be brought into compliance with the floodplain management requirements for new buildings.

$$\frac{\text{Cost of Improvement or Cost to Repair to Pre-Damage Condition}}{\text{Market Value of Building}} \geq 50\%$$

Please note:

- You must provide an estimate of the cost to perform the proposed improvements or repairs. If your building has been damaged, the cost estimate must include all work required to repair the building to its pre-damage condition. The cost estimate must include all labor and materials. If the work will be done by a contractor, the contractor's overhead and profit must be included. If the work will be done by the owner or volunteers, market rates must be used to estimate the cost of materials and the value of labor. Attached to this notice is a list of costs that must be included and costs that are excluded. After we review the cost estimate, we may require that it be broken down to show all materials and labor estimates.
 - You must provide a market value appraisal of the building that is prepared by a professional appraiser according to standard practices of the profession. We will review the appraisal to determine that it accurately describes your building and does not include the value of the land, accessory buildings, and landscaping. Alternatively, we will use the tax assessment value of your building as the estimate of the market value of the building before the work is performed.
- If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact the office closest to the site:
Chambersburg Office : 717 496-4996 Bedford Office: 814 310-2326 Somerset Office: 814 444-6112

Attachments:

- Requirements for Applications for Permits for Substantial Improvements and Repair of Substantial Damage
- Costs for Substantial Improvements and Repair of Substantial Damage
- Owner's Affidavit
- Contractor's Affidavit

Please contact our office if you have questions about the substantial improvement and substantial damage requirements. Your building may have to be brought into compliance with the floodplain management requirements for new construction.

Applications for permits to work on existing buildings that are located in Special Flood Hazard Areas must include the following:

- Current photographs of the exterior (front, rear, sides)
- If your building has been damaged, include photographs of the interior and exterior; provide pre-damage photos of the exterior, if available
- Detailed description of the proposed improvement (rehabilitation, remodeling, addition, etc.) or repairs n Cost estimate of the proposed improvement or the cost estimate to repair the damaged building to its before-damage condition
- Elevation certificate or elevation survey - You may submit a market value appraisal prepared by a licensed professional appraiser or we will use the tax assessment value of the building
- Owner's affidavit (signed and dated)
- Contractor's affidavit (signed and dated)

Costs for Substantial Improvements and Repair of Substantial Damage
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Included Costs

Items that must be included in the costs of improvement or costs to repair are those that are directly associated with the building. The following list of costs that must be included is not in-tended to be exhaustive, but characterizes the types of costs that must be included:

- Materials and labor, including the estimated value of donated or discounted materials and owner or volunteered labor
- Site preparation related to the improvement or repair (foundation excavation, filling in basements) Demolition and construction debris disposal
- Labor and other costs associated with demolishing, moving, or altering building components to accommodate improvements, additions, and making repairs
- Costs associated with complying with any other regulation or code requirement that is triggered by the work, including costs to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Costs associated with elevating a structure to an elevation that is lower than the BFE
- Construction management and supervision
- Contractor's overhead and profit
- Sales taxes on materials
- **Structural elements and exterior finishes, including:**
 - Foundations (e.g., spread or continuous foundation footings, perimeter walls, chain walls, pilings, columns, posts, etc.)
 - Monolithic or other types of concrete slabs
 - Bearing walls, tie beams, trusses n Joists, beams, subflooring, framing, ceilings
 - Interior non-bearing walls
 - Exterior finishes (e.g., brick, stucco, siding, painting, and trim)
 - Windows and exterior doors n Roofing, gutters, and downspouts
 - Hardware
 - Attached decks and porches
- **Interior finish elements, including:**
 - Floor finishes (e.g., hardwood, ceramic, vinyl, linoleum, stone, and wall-to-wall carpet over subflooring)
 - Bathroom tiling and fixtures
 - Wall finishes (e.g., drywall, paint, stucco, plaster, paneling, and marble)
 - Built-in cabinets (e.g., kitchen, utility, entertainment, storage, and bathroom)
 - Interior doors
 - Interior finish carpentry
 - Built-in bookcases and furniture
 - Hardware
 - Insulation
- **Utility and service equipment, including:**
 - HVAC equipment n Plumbing fixtures and piping
 - Electrical wiring, outlets, and switches
 - Light fixtures and ceiling fans
 - Security systems
 - Built-in appliances
 - Central vacuum systems
 - Water filtration, conditioning, and re-circulation systems

Excluded Costs

Items that can be excluded are those that are not directly associated with the building. The following list characterizes the types of costs that may be excluded:

- Clean-up and trash removal
- Costs to temporarily stabilize a building so that it is safe to enter to evaluate required repairs
- Costs to obtain or prepare plans and specifications
- Land survey costs n Permit fees and inspection fees
- Carpeting and recarpeting installed over finished flooring such as wood or tiling
- Outside improvements, including landscaping, irrigation, sidewalks, driveways, fences, yard lights, swimming pools, pool enclosures, and detached accessory structures (e.g., garages, sheds, and gazebos)
- Costs required for the minimum necessary work to correct existing violations of health, safety, and sanitary codes n Plug-in appliances such as washing machines, dryers, and stoves

Sample Owner's Affidavit: Substantial Improvement or Repair of Substantial Damage

Property Address / Parcel ID Number:

Owner's Name / Owner's Address/Phone:

Contractor / Contractor's License Number:

Date of Contractor's Estimate:

I hereby attest that the description included in the permit application for the work on the existing building that is located at the property identified above is all of the work that will be done, including all improvements, rehabilitation, remodeling, repairs, additions, and any other form of improvement. I further attest that I requested the above-identified contractor to prepare a cost estimate for all of the work, including the contractor's overhead and profit. I acknowledge that if, during the course of construction, I decide to add more work or to modify the work described, that the *[insert community]* will re-evaluate its comparison of the cost of work to the market value of the building to determine if the work is substantial improvement. Such re-evaluation may require revision of the permit and may subject the property to additional requirements. I also understand that I am subject to enforcement action and/or fines if inspection of the property reveals that I have made or authorized repairs or improvements that were not included in the description of work and the cost estimate for that work that were the basis for issuance of a permit.

Owner's Signature

Date:

Notarized

Contractor's Affidavit: Substantial Improvement or Repair of Substantial Damage

Property Address / Parcel ID Number:

Owner's Name / Owner's Address/Phone:

Contractor / Contractor's License Number:

Date of Contractor's Estimate:

I hereby attest that I have personally inspected the building located at the above-referenced address and discussed the nature and extent of the work requested by the owner, including all improvements, rehabilitation, remodeling, repairs, additions, and any other form of improvement. At the request of the owner, I have prepared a cost estimate for all of the improvement work requested by the owner and the cost estimate includes, at a minimum, the cost elements identified by the *[community]* that are appropriate for the nature of the work. If the work is repair of damage, I have prepared a cost estimate to repair the building to its pre-damage condition. I acknowledge that if, during the course of construction, the owner requests more work or modification of the work described in the application, that a revised cost estimate must be provided to the *[insert community]*, which will re-evaluate its comparison of the cost of work to the market value of the building to determine if the work is substantial improvement. Such re-evaluation may require revision of the permit and may subject the property to additional requirements. I also understand that I am subject to enforcement action and/or fines if inspection of the property reveals that I have made or authorized repairs or improvements that were not included in the description of work and the cost estimate for that work that were the basis for issuance of a permit.

Owner's Signature

Date:

Notarized