

North Carolinians Need Updated Building Codes! Vote Against HB 488

The NC Building Code Council has nearly completed an overdue update to the NC Building Codes. According to independent analysis and results from homebuilders who are already incorporating provisions of the proposed code, these updated Codes will save new residential homeowners an average of \$399 (18.7%) a year in utility costs. Updating the codes in line with the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code will create thousands of new jobs, boost the North Carolina economy, and result in \$5.3 billion in savings to residential consumers over a thirty year period.¹

However, the NC General Assembly has introduced House Bill 488, that would throw out these savings and two years of work by the NC Building Code Council. Instead of new codes taking effect in January 2025, they would be delayed until 2031.

HB488 prohibits improvements in energy efficiency and resiliency that have been developed by the current Building Code Council. This would be disastrous. HB488 will cost North Carolinians hundreds of millions of dollars in higher utility bills and increased insurance rates, and the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in Federal Grants, and more homes destroyed by future hurricanes.

As [noted by Mike Causey](#), the Republican Insurance Commissioner, delaying building code updates “could disqualify cities and counties from federal Building Resilient Infrastructure Program (BRIC) grants,” and could have “long-term consequences to the citizens through adverse effects on insurance rates.... caused by ... a residential code that could age 16 years before the next ...update cycle....”

Hurricane Ian hit Florida in 2022, and went right through the Babcock Ranch community. The developer of Babcock Ranch had deliberately built that community to the most stringent building code standards. And guess what – [Babcock Ranch suffered only minor damage](#), while surrounding communities were devastated.

If the current Building Code Council is allowed to finish its work, the economic benefits to the 10 million people of NC are: \$5.3 Billion in utility bill savings over the next 30 years,¹ plus increased tax revenues, plus more manufacturing jobs, and creation of job training programs that will give more North Carolinians a living wage, and homes that are more likely to survive hurricanes.

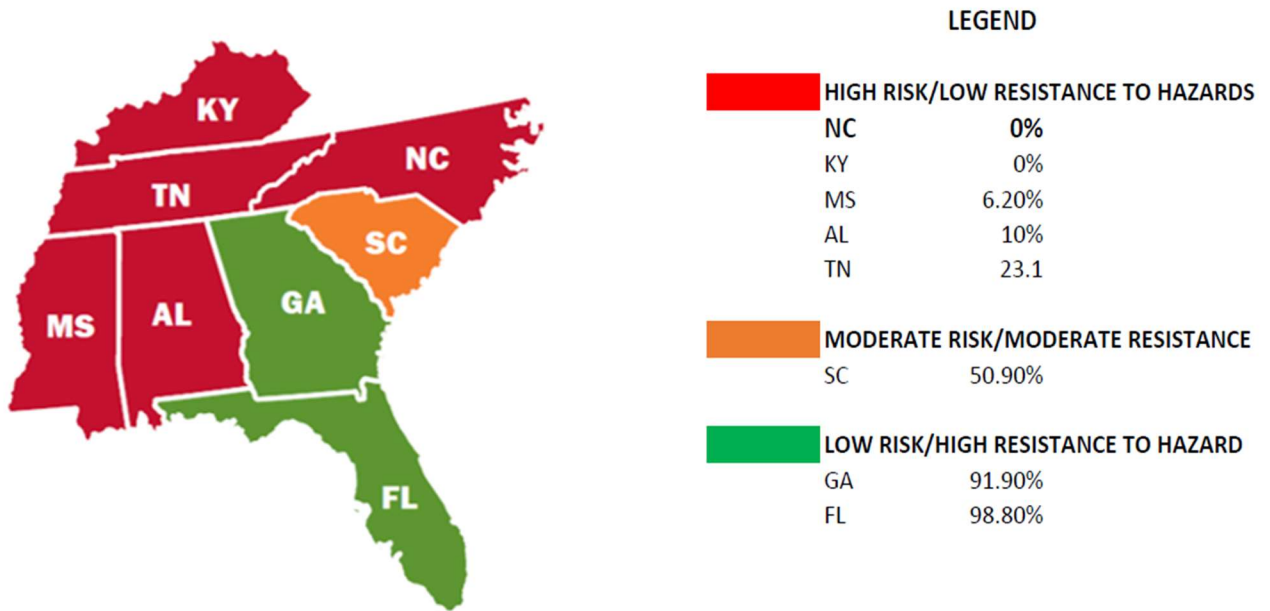
¹ Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of the 2024 North Carolina Energy Conservation Code, Page 2, PNNL-180509. March 24, 2023

And in case the Building Code Council makes any mistakes, the rules of the game give our legislators a chance to review and make changes to fine tune the new building codes before they take effect.

When considering grant applications, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) pays close attention to states' building codes. Are building codes up to date? Will homes built per the codes resist damage from hurricanes, flooding, etc.? FEMA's ranking of NC's building code is 0% – this is not a typo – NC's ranking is zero percent, compared to 51% for South Carolina, 92% for Georgia, and 99% for Florida.²

I say to our legislators: Think of your children and grandchildren who will be living in these homes long after you and I are gone, and listen to the advice of the architects (AIA), the heating and air conditioning companies (ASHRAE), the electricians (NEMA), and to our Republican Commissioner of Insurance. Please let the Building Code Council complete its update of the Building Codes.

David C. Sokal, MD
 Senior Scientist, Retired
 Member, Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
dcsokal@gmail.com
 919-308-7004
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**Figure 1. FEMA Region 4
 2023 Building Code Adoption Tracking
 Hazard-resistant Building Codes**

% = percentage of the state covered by hazard-resistant building codes

² FEMA Fact Sheet. 2023 Building Code Adoption Tracking: FEMA Region 4