

**City of Charleston, South Carolina**  
Department of Public Service, Building Inspections Division  
Chief Building Official's Interpretation & Guidelines

***Effectiveness Policy for recently adopted 2021 Charleston County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM)***

City Council adopted the new Charleston County 2021 Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) by ordinance 2020-140 [City Code of Ordinance §27-105] on October 13, 2020, making the 2021 FIRM effective on January 29, 2021.

- The Charleston County 2021 FIRM is applicable for all building permit applications submitted to the City on or after January 29, 2021.
- The Charleston County 2004 FIRM is applicable for all building permit applications submitted prior to January 29, 2021.

Note: Other City applications, such as the Technical Review Committee (TRC), Board of Architectural Review (BAR), and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) are not applicable to determine the effective FIRM. Only new building permit applications will determine the applicable FIRM and flood design requirements.

Based on the *Start of Construction* [refer to page 2], as defined in City Code of Ordinance §27-103, a project will comply with the effective FIRM at the time of *Start of Construction*.

- If a building permit application was submitted prior to January 29, 2021 and the *Start of Construction* has occurred within one-hundred-eighty (180) days of the permit issued date. The building must comply with the effective FIRM at that time, regardless of a building permit application being canceled and recreated for the project.
- If a building permit application was submitted prior to January 29, 2021 but the *Start of Construction* did not occurred within one-hundred-eighty (180) days of the permit issued date. The applicant is required to renew the building permit and the building will comply with the effective FIRM based on the updated issue date and *Start of Construction* within one-hundred-eighty (180) days of the updated permit issued date.

**Elevation Certificates** - completing elevation certificates for projects required to comply with the 2004 Charleston County FIRM but submit elevation certificates on or after January 29, 2021.

- *Section B - Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Information:* use 2021 FIRM information only.
- *Section C - Building Elevation Information (Survey Required):* use 2021 FIRM and NAVD 1988 vertical datum information only.
- *Section D - Surveyor, Engineer, or Architect Certification:* within the 'Comments' field, include:
  - 2004 FIRM information for items B7 – B11.
  - NGVD 1929 vertical datum information for items C2 and C2 – C2h.
  - Conversion calculation from NAVD 1988 datum to NGVD 1929 datum

**Example** (within elevation certificate 'Comments' field):

PERMITTED FLOOD: (AE ELEV 11') 45019C 0513 J, 11-17-2004 NGVD1929  
29 DATUM ELEVATIONS a-13.7 b-25.7 d-11.6 e-13.5 f-11.2 g-11.6 h-11.2 // - CONVERSION = 88 DATUM PLUS 0.98', PER NG

**Start of Construction for New Building Projects** [City Code of Ordinance §27-103] (within an AE or VE zone) means the date the permit was issued, provided the actual start of construction, repair, reconstruction, or improvement was within one hundred eighty (180) days of the permit date. The actual start means the first placement of **permanent construction** of a building (including a manufactured home) on a site, such as:

- Placement/pouring of building slabs, footings, foundations
- Installation of building piles
- Construction of building columns
- Any building construction work beyond the stage of excavation or the placement of a manufactured home on a foundation

Permanent Construction does not include:

- Land preparation (clearing, grading, and filling)
- Installation of streets and/or walkways
- Excavation for a basement, footings, piers, or foundations
- The erection of temporary forms
- The installation on the property of accessory buildings (garages or sheds not occupied as dwelling units or not part of the main building).

**Start of Construction for Substantial Improvement Building Projects** [City Code of Ordinance §27-103] (within an AE or VE zone) means the first alteration of any wall, ceiling, floor, or other structural part of a building, whether or not that alteration affects the external dimensions of the building.