

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

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PRINCIPAL CLERK

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SENATE BILL DRS35195-NN-45

Short Title: Single Stair Bldg. Code Reform. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Mayfield and Moffitt (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO AMEND THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BUILDING CODE TO  
3 AUTHORIZE SINGLE-EXIT STAIRWAYS IN CERTAIN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.  
4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 SECTION 1.(a) Definitions. – For purposes of this act, the following definitions  
6 apply:

- 7 (1) Building Code. – The North Carolina Building Code.
- 8 (2) Building Code Council. – The North Carolina Building Code Council.
- 9 (3) Group R-2 occupancy. – A multifamily residential building, as defined in the  
10 Building Code. This does not include three- and four-family dwellings under  
11 the rulemaking authority of the North Carolina Residential Code Council.
- 12 (4) Qualifying R-2 building. – A Group R-2 occupancy building that contains  
13 between five and 32 dwelling units, having a total height of 75 feet or less  
14 above grade plane, and located solely on an individual lot.

15 SECTION 1.(b) Temporary Provisions. – Until the effective date of the permanent  
16 code amendments that the Building Code Council is required to adopt pursuant to subsection (d)  
17 of this section, the following shall apply:

- 18 (1) With respect to qualifying R-2 buildings as defined in subsection (a) of this  
19 section, the Building Code Council and all local government officials  
20 enforcing the Building Code shall apply the provisions in subsection (c) of  
21 this section regarding single-exit stairway requirements.
- 22 (2) The Building Code Council shall adopt permanent rules for qualifying R-2  
23 buildings as set forth in subsection (d) of this section.

24 SECTION 1.(c) Single-Exit Stairway for Qualifying R-2 Buildings. –  
25 Notwithstanding any other provision of the Building Code or law to the contrary, the Building  
26 Code Council shall amend the Building Code to allow a qualifying R-2 building, as defined in  
27 subsection (a) of this section, to be served by a single-exit stairway in lieu of multiple exits,  
28 provided the building meets either the requirements for mid-rise single-exit buildings in  
29 subdivision (1) of this subsection or the requirements for low-rise single-exit buildings in  
30 subdivision (2) of this subsection, and meets all additional universal requirements set forth in  
31 subdivision (3) of this subsection, described as follows:

- 32 (1) Mid-rise single-exit buildings. – A qualifying R-2 building may be served by  
33 a single exit if all of the following are satisfied:
  - 34 a. The building has no more than eight total stories and has no more than  
35 seven stories above grade plane.
  - 36 b. There shall be no more than four dwelling units on any floor.



- 1 c. The building shall be of not less than two-hour fire-resistance-rated  
2 construction and shall be equipped throughout with an NFPA 13  
3 automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 of the  
4 Building Code. Residential-type sprinklers shall be used in all  
5 habitable spaces in each dwelling unit.
- 6 (2) Low-rise single-exit buildings. – A qualifying R-2 building may be served by  
7 a single exit if all of the following are satisfied:
- 8 a. The building has no more than three total stories, of which no more  
9 than two stories are above grade plane.
- 10 b. There shall be no more than six dwelling units on any floor.
- 11 c. The building shall be of not less than one-hour fire-resistance-rated  
12 construction or be equipped throughout with an NFPA 13 automatic  
13 sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 of the Building  
14 Code. Residential-type sprinklers shall be used in all habitable spaces  
15 in each dwelling unit.
- 16 (3) Universal requirements for all qualifying R-2 buildings. – A building meeting  
17 the requirements of either subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection shall also  
18 comply with all of the following to be eligible to be constructed with no more  
19 than one egress stair:
- 20 a. Stairway type. – An exterior stairway or an interior exit stairway shall  
21 be provided. Any interior exit stairway, including any related exit  
22 passageway, shall be pressurized in accordance with Section 909.20  
23 of the Building Code or an alternative design approved by a licensed  
24 engineer that achieves an equivalent result. Doors in the stairway shall  
25 swing into the interior exit stairway regardless of occupant load  
26 served. Doors leading from the stairway to the building exterior are  
27 permitted to swing in the direction of exit travel.
- 28 b. Corridor separation. – A continuous corridor or exit passageway shall  
29 separate each dwelling unit entry or exit door from the door to an  
30 interior exit stairway or any related exit passageway. A dwelling unit  
31 door shall not open directly into an interior exit stairway but may open  
32 directly to an exterior stairway.
- 33 c. Travel distance to stairway. – There shall be no more than 20 feet of  
34 travel from the entry or exit door of any dwelling unit to the nearest  
35 entrance of the exit stairway.
- 36 d. Total travel distance. – The total travel distance, measured in  
37 accordance with Section 1017 of the Building Code, from the most  
38 remote point within any dwelling unit to an exit discharge shall not  
39 exceed 125 feet.
- 40 e. Egress courts. – The exit serving the qualifying R-2 building shall not  
41 terminate in an egress court where the court depth exceeds the court  
42 width unless it is possible to exit in either direction to the public way.
- 43 f. Elevators. – Elevators shall be pressurized in accordance with Section  
44 909.21 of the Building Code, shall open into elevator lobbies that  
45 comply with Section 3006 of the Building Code, or use an alternative  
46 design approved by a licensed engineer that achieves an equivalent  
47 result. Where approved by the code-enforcement official, natural  
48 ventilation is permitted to be substituted for pressurization if it  
49 prevents the accumulation of smoke or toxic gases.
- 50 g. Other occupancies. – Other occupancies in the same building are  
51 permitted only if they comply with all requirements of the Building

- 1 Code and do not communicate with the Group R-2 occupancy portion
- 2 of the building or with the single-exit stairway. Parking garages and
- 3 occupied roofs accessory to the Group R-2 occupancy are permitted to
- 4 communicate with the exit stairway.
- 5 h. Exit discharge. – The exit serving the qualifying R-2 building shall not
- 6 discharge through any other occupancy, including any accessory
- 7 parking garage.
- 8 i. Openings. – There shall be no openings within 10 feet of any
- 9 unprotected opening into the exit stairway, other than required exit
- 10 doors having a minimum one-hour fire-resistance rating.
- 11 (4) Means-of-egress requirements. – A qualifying R-2 building meeting the
- 12 requirements of either subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection and subdivision
- 13 (3) of this subsection shall be deemed to comply with the means-of-egress
- 14 requirements for exit stairways under the North Carolina Fire Code and any
- 15 applicable local ordinances.

16 **SECTION 1.(d)** Additional Rulemaking Authority. – Notwithstanding  
17 G.S. 150B-19(4), the Building Code Council shall adopt rules to amend the Building Code in a  
18 manner substantively identical with subsection (c) of this section, including modifications needed  
19 to incorporate qualifying R-2 buildings as defined in subdivision (a)(4) of this section, and to  
20 make conforming changes throughout the Building Code. Rules adopted pursuant to this section  
21 are not subject to Part 3 of Article 2A of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Rules adopted  
22 pursuant to this section shall become effective as provided in G.S. 150B-21.3(b1), as though 10  
23 or more written objections had been received as provided in G.S. 150B-21.3(b2).

24 **SECTION 1.(e)** Sunset. – This section expires on the date that permanent rules  
25 adopted as required by subsection (d) of this section become effective.

26 **SECTION 2.** Effective Date. – This act is effective when it becomes law.