

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) New Rules for Code Officials Effective January 1, 2025

Certification/Inspection FAQs

1. If I hire a new inspector (let's say in the month of March 2025) and the inspector is under the new program for certification, will the inspector need to ride along with other inspectors until he can meet the state requirements to obtain the new probationary certificate?

ANSWER: *New inspectors may be issued a probationary certificate once hired with a Certificate of Employment form by the AHJ and one of several ways listed in 11 NCAC 08 .0602 such as under supervision, by meeting the education and experience requirements for the standard certificate at that Level and Trade, passing the Board course End-of-Course (EOC) with a 70%.*

2. Will an inspector need both Level I and Level II Standard Certificates to apply for a Probationary Level III under the new system?

ANSWER: *No, similar to existing legacy system, but note the rules for the probationary level III.*

3. Will the timeframe from a Probationary Level II to a Standard Certificate Level II (Fire) be reduced to 1 year?

ANSWER: *Yes, the new Fire Rule 11 NCAC 08 .0741(f)(8) reduces two years to one year. This is similar for all trades Level I and II. Probationary Level III was always one year.*

4. Why get a Level 3 if you already passed the Level 1 and Level 2?

ANSWER: *Depending on the trade, the Level I and 2 may not cover all the building occupancies or systems. For example Hazardous or Institutional. Also, attaining Level 3 will reduce the number of certificates needed for annual renewal. An inspector holding both Level I and 2 for B,M,P,E is 8 certificates vs 4 for Level 3.*

5. When will the application process on the website be updated?

ANSWER: *Unknown at this time. Staff met with the database Application Development Team on 2/18/2025 to discuss the priority changes needed. It could be several months. The primary issue to resolve is being able to apply for multiple Levels I and II concurrently because the existing system does not permit this. Staff is discussion a workaround in the meantime. The primary indicator is the application date before or after January 1, 2025. Application records submitted after this date may have to be retroactively corrected in the system.*

6. If I have a new inspector that passed classes, can they get a reduction [in education and experience] to be able to sit for state exam in order to use the 2018 code books?

ANSWER: *Good question. Maybe. First while there are some reductions in experience requirements, there aren't any reductions for education except Construction Management degrees are now included in Building. Everyone still needs to pass the Board course before they can earn eligibility to register for the State exam. Inspectors holding probationary certificates issued prior to January 1, 2025, had several ways to qualify for the probationary. Supervised 6 months and two Level I inspections was/is one way. 2 years with a probationary Level I was another. The new rules reduce the 2 years down to 1 so an experience reduction may be possible. Contact staff if you think this applies to you. Also, 11 NCAC 08 .0707 Special Circumstances has been amended to include a new option for those applicants that don't quite meet the rules as written: (e) Applicants may submit other experience in the design, construction, installation or inspection of buildings and electrical,*

mechanical, plumbing, and fire systems for consideration as other special circumstances meeting the Board's requirements. The Board's Qualification and Evaluation Committee shall consider such experience on a case-by-case basis and make a recommendation to the Board.

7. Can a new hire completely skip over Levels I and II and go straight to Level III?

ANSWER: Yes, they always have been able to do that if they met the education and experience requirements for Level III. Going through Level I and II was one way to gain the education and experience.

8. Will a Level II still be allowed to inspect residential?

ANSWER: Yes, legacy inspectors under the old system (those issued prior to January 1, 2025) with a probationary or standard certificate will be authorized to continue to inspect residential through December 31, 2030. But effective January 1, 2031, for Building inspectors Level II will be limited to Commercial, up to 4 stories except for hazardous and institutional occupancies per 11 NCAC 08 .0737. If they haven't earned a Level III by then they will need a new Level I in addition to the Level II. Note, an inspector who holds a standard Level II now may apply for a probationary Level III. [NOTE: Each trade has its own limitations]

9. Building Level 2 showed an exception for Institutional and Hazardous Occupancies. Do Plumbing and Mechanical have these occupancy exceptions?

ANSWER: No. The new rules for Building (.0737), Electrical (.0738), Mechanical (.0739), Plumbing (.0740), and Fire (.0741) are trade specific. [NOTE: Staff is working on a copy of the new regulations (statutes, rules, bylaws) to post on the web.]

10. Is there a square footage limitation for Level II or just the four-story limitation?

ANSWER: It depends on the trade. For example Fire Levels have been primarily by Occupancy (except Assembly). The new rules are trade specific but in general: Building is limited to up to 4 stories but has no square footage limitation; Electrical no square footage limitation for Commercial; Mechanical no square footage limitation; Plumbing no square footage limitation but limited to Commercial up to 4 stories.

11. Can a Level II Inspector perform Level I inspection or is must it only be inspected by a Level I? I'm trying to understand if it is beneficial for a new applicant to apply for Level II even if they have the education/experience to a get a Level II certificate.

ANSWER: No, under the new system a certificate applied for and issued after January 1, 2025, a Level II (Commercial) will not be authorized to inspect Level I (Residential) mainly because the new Board courses will only teach either the Building or Residential Code AND to facilitate ICC certificate holders of either Residential or Commercial certificates. However, under the new (and legacy) rules anyone whose education and experience qualifies them for Level II would also qualify for Level I and may apply for both certificates. [NOTE: For multi-trade inspectors this could mean eight (8) certificates versus four (4)].

Education FAQs

1. Will instructors be responsible to teach both Residential Code and the Building Code [Commercial] for Level III and still have only 40 hours?

ANSWER: *No, the Level III Board course historically hasn't taught the Residential Code although the State exam has included a percentage of Residential questions. As before, someone preparing for the Level III State exam may want to take the Level I course for Residential knowledge.*

2. Will only newly hired inspectors be required to take the Law and Administration course?

ANSWER: *Yes, once you took the "Law & Admin" under the legacy system you don't have to take it again. No change for existing inspectors. NOTE: There have been many, many changes to N.C. General Statutes that pertain to administration of the N.C. State Building Code. For example, Chapter 160D replacing the prior County and City statutes. It may be beneficial for inspectors to voluntarily enroll in the new online Supplemental tab Law and Admin Course as a refresher when it becomes available, and pass the 40-question practice test for CE.*

3. If we have already registered for a Law and Admin class will we fall under the new rules?

ANSWER: *Possibly. It depends when you had your probationary or standard certificate(s) issued and when you take the class. A new Law and Administration 80-question combination End-of-Course test (EOC)/State exam is being developed for deployment July 1, 2025, (See #2 above). This is completely new. Anyone taking Law & Admin Courses after July 1, 2025, will not have to take the EOC on the second day of class. Instead the Community College will report your name on the roster as "Pass." Following the classroom course, students must enroll in the Supplemental tab Law & Admin online Moodle course and pass the 40-question practice test. Once your education record shows a successful completion with a 70%, then you may register for the online proctored 80-question EOC/State exam. More information to follow on this.*

4. Will this increase the amount of Continuing Education (CE) needed each year to renew a standard certificate?

ANSWER: *No, CE is 6 hours per trade, so for example if under the new system an inspector holds both Building Level I and II they will still only need 6 hours for Building. The 6 hours will be "good" for both certificates.*

5. As of July 1, 2025, will we have the books for inspectors to test on 2024 codes?

ANSWER: *The 2024 Code books should be available "soon." Every code cycle transition has presented the same challenge take the Board course and then rush to take the State exam using the existing book(s) before the new code becomes effective January 1st and the Board courses and exams are updated. One difference this cycle is the delay in the code effective date until July 1, 2025. Another difference is that coincidentally the Board rule changes will impact the future Board course curriculum too. Timing is everything. Taking the Board course using one edition of the code may not sync with the 6 month or 2-year experience required by the probationary certificate to earn eligibility to register for the State exam. Many inspectors have waited until they have met the probationary experience requirements and then taken the Board course as an "exam prep/review" rather than at the start of their probationary period to learn the code. At this time, it is not clear that all the new State exams based on the 2024 codes will be available on July 1, 2025. More information forthcoming on this as it becomes available. The April meeting of the Board should bring some clarity to this.*