

The issue of code enforcement has also evolved over time. The State of Florida took an active role in uniform enforcement only recently. Prior to Hurricane Andrew, a given county may have built to standards that were worse than or exceeded the code in place at the time. Following consultation with building code development experts, which included the director of the Miami-Dade building department, the president of an engineering consulting firm and consultant to the South Florida Building Code, the consensus was that the issue was not only the contents of the code, but also enforcement of the code.

In an attempt to standardize construction, some cities and counties in Florida adopted building codes, some of the earliest being Clearwater, which adopted a draft of the Standard Building Code (SBC) in 1945 (Cox, 1962); Daytona Beach in 1946 (The Morning Journal, 1946); Bradenton and Manatee counties by 1950; Sarasota County in 1956 (Sarasota Journal, 1956), and Riviera Beach in Palm Beach County in 1957 (The Palm Beach Post, 1957). Miami-Dade and Broward counties adopted the South Florida Building Code (SFBC, [1957](#)) in 1957 and 1961, respectively. The SFBC, one of the most stringent codes in the United States, had some wind provisions since its inception. SBC made wind-load provisions mandatory in 1986. Modern wind design started in 1972 and improved considerably for low-rise construction in 1982 (Mehta, 2010). In addition, Florida's construction boom of the 1970s led the state authorities to promote a statewide uniformity of building standards. The first attempt was Chapter 553, "Building Construction Standards," of the Florida Statutes (F.S.), which was enacted in 1974 and required all counties to adopt a code by January 1st, 1975. The statute selected four allowable minimum codes as the pool from which jurisdictions needed to adopt their official building codes, namely: (1) SBC (Southern Building Code Congress International, 1975), (2) the SFBC (South Florida Building Code, 1957), (3) the One and Two Family Dwelling Code, (CABO) (ICC, 1992) and (4) the EPCOT code (enforced in Walt Disney World and based on the SBC, SFBC, and Uniform Building Code) (Reedy Creek Improvement District, 2002). However, the responsibility for the administration and enforcement was left to the discretion of 400 local jurisdictions as diverse as local governments, local school boards, and state agencies (Governor's Report, 1996). The State allowed the jurisdictions to choose any code from the four allowed codes and granted them the authority to amend the code according to their needs, as long as the amendments resulted in more stringent requirements and the power to enforce it.

Problems in the Building Code System

After 1975, there were two main codes in use in Florida before the 1990s: the SFBC in Miami-Dade and Broward counties and the SBC in most of the rest of the state. Although the SFBC was the most stringent code in Florida, this was uncorrelated with compliance and enforcement from many builders, design professionals, and inspectors. To a lesser extent, some of the code stringency was eroded for almost three decades (Getter, 1992; Fronstin & Holtmann, 1994). Some measures that watered down the code included the allowance of power-driven staples instead of nails for roof decking, thinner roofing-felt, 63 mph resisting shingles, and waferboards (pressed wood) as a replacement for plywood for roof decking. A study by Florida A&M University published in 1987 also highlighted deficiencies in code compliance and enforcement in the rest of Florida. Furthermore, the local amendments created a state of confusion, making it difficult for engineers, architects, and contractors to identify the locally administered codes and their jurisdictions (Shingle, 2007; Barnes et al., 1991).

The aftermath of Hurricane Andrew confirmed the concerns reported above. Post-storm damage surveys revealed innumerable violations to the SFBC (the absence of corner columns, vertical