
Inventory of the Dept. of General Services. State Building Standards Commission Records

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Inventory of the Dept. of General Services. State Building Standards Commission Records

Inventory: F3874 and R109

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Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Dept. of General Services. State Building Standards Commission Records

Dates: 1955-1995

Collection number: F3874 and R109

Creator: California. State Building Standards Commission

Collection Size: 14.5 cubic feet

Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California

Abstract: The records of the California Building Standards Commission reflect the administrative processes of review, approval, adoption, publication, and implementation of California's building codes.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Agency History

The Building Standards Commission (BSC) is part of the State of California's lineage of agencies to promote and regulate building safety. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire was seen by many as confirmation to the State's need for building regulations. The State Tenement Housing Act, adopted in 1909, set the precedent for state regulation of design and construction in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare. The Commission of Immigration and Housing and the Division of Safety of the Department of Engineering were created in 1913. These two offices gained separate regulatory authority, but unfortunately this established a precedent of different state departments responding individually to similar building problems instead of collaboratively.

The first Uniform Building Code was published in 1927 by the Pacific Coast Building Officials, which was then adopted in 1929 to act as standard building regulations for the state. In 1970, the Commission was required to adopt private industry building codes by reference (Statutes of 1970, ch. 1449) and the budget was reduced because research on codes not written by State agencies could not be justified. Currently, the BSC reviews the newest model codes published by an independent code-developing body the International Code Conference (ICC), before adopting some or all of them for use within the BSC's jurisdiction.

The BSC was created in 1953 as an independent commission to eliminate duplication and overlap in state building regulations (Statutes of 1953, chapter 1500). Before the BSC became part of the Department of Public Works in 1959, it did not have a budget for staffing or research and therefore had little influence on change. However, the BSC's authority proceeded to develop as it moved to the Department of Finance in 1962 and finally to the Department of General Services in 1963 (Statutes of 1962, chapter 59 and Statutes of 1963, chapter 786). The Building Standards Law clarified the BSC's responsibilities for the evaluation and preparation of uniform building standards and provided Commission members with four-year term appointments (Statutes of 1965, chapter 1828).

In 1979, Senator Robbins introduced SB 331, which provided the Building Standards Commission with broader powers in order to correct problems resulting from conflicting state regulations (Statutes of 1979, chapter 1152). The law proposed all building regulations adopted or changed by various state agencies would be reviewed and approved by the Commission before the regulations would be put into effect. The legislation also called for building standards to be removed from multiple titles of the California Code of Regulations and put into a single California Code of Regulations, Title 24. This code contains all of the building standards of the State of California and is divided into nine parts: Part 1-Administrative regulations of the State Building Standards Commission; Part 2-State Building Code references the Uniform Building Code; Part 3- State Electrical Code references the National Electrical Code; Part 4 -State Mechanical Code references the Uniform Mechanical Code; Part5 -State Plumbing Code references the Uniform Plumbing Code; Part 6 -Special Building Regulations; Part 7 -State Elevator Construction Code; Part 8 -State Historical Building Code; and Part 12 -State Reference Standards Code references Uniform Building Code Standards.

The Commission currently consists of eleven members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. The cabinet secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency, or the secretary's representative, also currently serves as the Commission Chair. The Building Standards Commission members represent the public, building design professionals, the building and construction industry, local-government building officials, fire officials, and labor.

The Commission functions in a quasi-judicial capacity. It determines the performance standards and provides a format for State building regulations; approved, rejected, or requested new regulations; and reviews the appeals of agencies, businesses, or private citizens, which has been affected by the building regulations or decisions of any agency. To meet the increasing size and complexity of its tasks, the Commission appointed advisory panels to compile, integrate, and draft new regulations and constantly update those already published. The panel's findings are submitted to the affected agencies and are open for public review before being adopted by the Commission and incorporated into the California Administrative Code, Title 24, Building Standards Code.

Scope and Content

The records of the Building Standards Commission (BSC) consist of 14.5 cubic feet of textual records that were processed at two separate times. The first group was processed in the early 1990s and these records have the identification number F3874. The second group was processed in 2008 and these have the identification number R109. Both groups are described within this finding aid.

The records processed with the number F3874 contain two cubic feet of textual records pertaining to the BSC from 1955-1971. This group is organized into seven series: (1) General Correspondence, (2) Administrative Files, (3) Committees and Subcommittees, (4) Advisory Panels, (5) State Agencies, (6) Public and Private Interest Groups, and (7) Legislation. Most series are arranged in reverse chronological order by year, except where noted. Some records within each series are incomplete because the Commission's filing system changed often. Materials relating to specific subjects may be found in more than one series.

The majority of the BSC records consist of 12.5 cubic feet of textual records and six floppy disks containing electronic data. This record group is identified by R109. The records are arranged into 5 series covering the period of 1976-1995. The records includes Commission meeting agenda books, chronological files, rulemaking files, new prison construction standards, and correspondence from a special task force on state design and construction policy. The collection documents the effort of the BSC to produce sensible and useable state building standards and administrative regulations that implement or enforce those standards. The records of the BSC reflect the administrative processes of review, approval, adoption, publication, and implementation of California's building codes.

The BSC meeting agenda books, Series R109.1, represent the BSC's main activities, which included the review, approval, and adoption of building standards. These agenda books include requests from state agencies and the public for adoption of new building standards and background information that assisted the BSC in making their decision. One subject of interest found within the agenda books may be the implementation of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1981 into state design requirements and enforcement of those requirements.

The Chronological Files (Series R109.2) contain the BSC's general correspondence with related state agencies, representatives, and members of the public regarding disabled access requirements, meeting locations, and the itinerary of the BSC's executive director.

The Rulemaking Files (Series R109.3) demonstrate the BSC process of receiving requests for change from varied state agencies. The regular rulemaking files express the different agencies need for change from building standards and the BSC's response to their requests. The files from 1980-1987 represent the administrative function of the commission. AB 47 (Chaptered 865) of 1991 introduced new responsibilities into the code adoption process. This bill transferred more of the building standard adoption authority to the commission and away from the Office of Safety Administration, Office of the State Fire Marshall, Office of State Health Planning and Development, or the Department of Housing and Community Development. The emergency rulemaking files reflect this change and include more emergency requests from these agencies. Some of the frequent issues found within the emergency rulemaking files are seismic safety regulations, fire prevention measures, and universal accessibility.

The records regarding new prison construction, Series R109.4, are examples of specific design elements and broader planning issues that the BSC studied from previously constructed institutions. The study included requirements for establishing the need for a new facility, planning issues between the Department of Corrections and the local communities of the proposed location, financial discretion, guidelines for space standards, and other basic design criteria.

The records pertaining to the State Design and Construction Task Force appear in Series R109.5. The task force was established through AB 246 (1987). This task force was intended as a two-year review of the State's design and construction policies. Phase I was conducted to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make proposals for improvement. Issues that the BSC thought needed to be addressed include the decisions to distribute public work to in-house design teams or to private practice, fees assessed to projects, and how related State agencies should manage construction. Phase II of implementation of changes was not executed because funding for the task force was withdrawn.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

California Building Standards Commission

Construction industry Law and legislation

Building laws

Related Collections at the California State Archives

Assembly Governmental Efficiency and Economy Committee Records

Department of Health Services Records

Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health

Department of General Services - Division of the State Architect and State Consumer Services

Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development

Office of the State Fire Marshall

Related Resources not at the California State Archives

California Administrative Code Title 24, California State Law Library

ID R109.1,
Boxes 1-7,
Folders 1-16

Series 1 **Commission Meeting Agenda Books 1976-1993**

Physical Description: 159 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

The Commission Meeting Agenda Books contain proposed agendas, minutes of meetings, background information, and relevant correspondence for a designated meeting. Public access to copies of these books was given at designated locations throughout the state 45-days before a Building Standards Commission meeting took place. This allowed for statewide public review and comment before the proposed building standard adoption or changes.

SB 331(Statutes of 1979, Chapter 1152) provided the BSC with broader powers in order to correct problems that had arisen, including conflicting, duplicate, and overlapping state regulations. These problems had allowed more than twenty agencies, ranging from the Barbers' Licensing Board to the State Architect, to adopt building standards. As a result of SB 331, all proposed building regulations adopted by various state agencies must be reviewed and approved by the BSC before the regulations had any force or effect. The majority of the Meeting Agenda Books commence after this legislation was enacted.

ID R109.2,
Boxes 7-9,
Folders 17-5

Series 2 **Chronological Files 1988-1993**

Physical Description: 30 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

The Chronological Files contain incoming and outgoing correspondence between the Building Standards Commission and representatives of affected state agencies, members of the building industry, and interested members of the public. The correspondence from the Building Standards Commission is primarily from the Executive Director as a response to inquiries of the Commission. Subjects found within the records include the BSC's yearly goals and objectives, elevator safety, and disabled access.

ID R109.3,
Boxes 9-11,
Folders 6-19

Series 3 **Rulemaking Files 1980-1995**

Physical Description: 59 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

There are two types of files within the Rulemaking Files: Regular Rulemaking Files and Emergency Rulemaking Files. Their chronological order has been maintained.

The Regular Rulemaking Files contain proposed building standards administrated by numerous state agencies, other than the Department of Housing and Community Development, Division of the State Architect, Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, and Office of the State Fire Marshal. All other state agencies can propose a new building standard, information on hearings, drafts for the proposed change, public hearing notices, statement of reasons for change, and factual background information which the Commission relies on in order to propose its regulations. The state agency must then have adopted the changes within one year and submit the adopted changes and records to the Building Standards Commission for approval.

The Emergency Rulemaking Files contain proposed building standards submitted by any state agency, including the Department of Housing and Community Development, Division of the State Architect, Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, and Office of the State Fire Marshal. These state agencies may have adopted emergency changes to the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, and then submitted them to the BSC for approval. The state agency did not need to initially follow the regular rulemaking process when adopting the emergency change. However, if the Building Standards Commission approved the change, the agency must have followed the regular rulemaking process and certified that it had complied with the regular rulemaking process. The adopting state agency must have done this within 120 days of the change's effective date in order to maintain the effectiveness of the change.

ID R109.4,
Boxes 11-12,
Folders 20-14

Series 4 **New Prison Construction Standards 1990**

Physical Description: 19 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged numerically by the exhibits provided by California State Prisons.

Scope and Content Note

Files include exhibits of prison construction elements accumulated during a one-year study by the BSC. These include feasibility studies, prison specific planning studies, examples of bids and proposed budgets, cost control studies, illustrated design criteria guidelines, and illustrated space standards.

ID R109.5,
Boxes 12-13,
Folders 5-7

Series 5 **State Design and Construction Policy Task Force Files 1988-1989**

Physical Description: 22 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

The State Design and Construction Policy Task Force existed for two years in order to research problems regarding design and/or construction encountered by state agencies and to recommend solutions. Its work was divided Phase I and II. The BSC decided Phase I would focus on building standards, plan check, inspection, approvals, and other design and construction processes. A number of meeting transcripts are also included in this part of the files. Phase II dealt with how public work is distributed to in house design teams or to private practitioners, selection procedures, fees, contracts, construction management, and other procedures relating to the state's interface with private practitioners performing public work. Typical material found in these files include questionnaires from the BSC to affected state agencies, background studies submitted by state agencies, meeting transcripts, and report drafts of the BSC's findings

F3874:1-8

Series 6 **General Correspondence 1961-1970**

Physical Description: 8 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

Selected incoming and outgoing correspondence, principally chronological files, between the Commission and business groups, other state agencies, individual Commission members, and private citizens. Topics include proposed legislation, changes in the Code, Commission and advisory panel meetings, and interagency relations.

F3874:9-20

Series 7 **Administrative Files 1962-1971**

Physical Description: 12 file folders

a) Meeting File (1962-70):

Physical Description: 3 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

Agendas, minutes, memoranda, correspondence, and other official records relating to Commission Meetings. Subseries also includes biographical sketches of some commissioners.

b) Budget (1965-71):

Physical Description: 1 file folder

Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

Correspondence, budget reports, operating expenses, projected workload, legislative analyses, and other materials relating to the financial needs of the Commission, the justification of continued legislative support, and the growth and decline of the Commission reflecting that support.

c) Reports and Studies. (1955-70):

Physical Description: 4 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

Arranged with Biennial, Activity, and Governor's Council reports first, the rest of the reports in reverse chronology, and then the Management Information and Control Study. The Biennial Reports are the only complete set of reports in the subseries and they demonstrate the changing responsibilities of the Commission. The Activity and Governor's Council reports are almost complete but contain minimal information. The other reports are mostly single items that resemble the Activity reports in format and content. The Management Information and Control study contains organizational charts and a description of the SBSC.

d) Interpretations of the Code (1966-68, 1970):

Physical Description: 4 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

Miscellaneous correspondence sent and received requesting hearings and interpretations on specific portions of the Code. The Byron Jackson Pumps, Inc. case describes a request for a ruling on divergent handrail standards.

F3874:21-26

Series 8 **Committees and Subcommittees 1958-1969**

Physical Description: 6 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note

Arranged alphabetically by committee and include Botsai (adoption by reference), Coding, Executive, Handrail, Joint State Agencies Building Code, and Legislative committees. Minutes, agendas, correspondence, memoranda, meeting reports, rosters, code analyses, proposed legislation, and other materials relating to the activities of committees comprised of commissioners.

F3874:27-39

Series 9 **Advisory Panels 1963-1970**

Physical Description: 14 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note

Arranged alphabetically with a general file placed first and include Architectural, Electrical, Elevator, Housing, Local Government Relations, Mechanical, Occupancy, Organized Camps, Plumbing, Structural, and Title 19 (State Fire Marshall) advisory panels. Correspondence, memoranda, agencies, minutes, meeting reports, rosters, policy statements, and other materials relating to the drafting and updating of portions of the Code. The Architectural, Electrical, and Structural panels offer the largest examples of panel activities.

F3874:40-44

Series 10 **State Agencies 1968-1970**

Physical Description: 5 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note

Arranged alphabetically by department and include Education, State Fire Marshall, Housing and Community Development, Industrial Relations, and Public Health. Correspondence, memoranda, code proposals, and excerpts of minutes reflecting the actions of the Commission on these agencies.

F3874:45-52

Series 11 **Public and Private Interest Groups 1959-1971**

Physical Description: 8 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note

Arranged alphabetically by organization and include Committee for a State Uniform Building Code, International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), Building Standards Coordinating Council (BSCC), Construction Industries Legislative Council, League of California Cities, International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and the National Conference of States Building Codes. Correspondence, memoranda, minutes, meeting notes, reports and other material relating to the Commission and the Groups effected by State regulations. BSCC and ICBO files show the development of pressure on the Commission to adopt private building codes by reference instead of by Commission review.

F3874:53-62

Series 12 **Legislation 1959-1970**

Physical Description: 10 file folders

Arrangement

Drafts of legislation arranged in original order. Correspondence, memoranda, newsletters, legal interpretations, and other materials are arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and Content Note

These records relate to legislation endorsed or opposed by the Commission. The Commission actively supported AB 1739 (1961) and AB 49x (1962), which developed the Commission's responsibilities, and AB 2237 (1965), which clarified the Commission's authority. Materials pertaining to those bills are files separately after the year in which they were introduced.