



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Office of Construction &
Facilities Management

Office of Facilities Planning
Facilities Standards Service

STANDARDS ALERT

FEBRUARY 18, 2025
003C2B-SA-023

VA Standards and Criteria for Non-Permanent and Temporary Buildings/Structures

ISSUE: For projects that require swing space to accommodate relocated staff, patient services, and/or IT equipment/infrastructure, trailers or modular buildings are used on site, in some cases, for several years. In the past, these have been notionally referred to as “temporary.” The IBC however defines “Temporary Structures” as buildings utilized for less than 180 days (or up to 1 year with exception). As these “non-permanent” buildings/structures are sometimes utilized for a longer period of time, defining them as “temporary” is not appropriate. A new definition for these structures as “non-permanent” buildings/structures is necessary and the applicability of VA standards and criteria to these facilities requires clarification.

BACKGROUND: When VA buildings/structures are intended for use for several years and will then be removed or demolished, the period of use is beyond the limit allowed for Temporary Structures in the 2024 International Building Code (IBC). These “non-permanent” buildings/structures are not currently defined by codes or by the VA. This issue was discussed in the Advisory Committee on Structural Safety of VA Facilities meeting in May 2024. CFM collaborated with VHA HEFP to issue this Standards Alert to provide the definitions for “Non-Permanent Building/Structure” and “Temporary Building/Structure”, and clarify the applicability of VA standards and criteria for these facilities.

NEW STANDARD: DEFINITIONS AND APPLICABILITY OF VA STANDARDS AND CRITERIA:

Non-Permanent Building/Structure: Any building or structure intended for use for a period exceeding the limit allowed for Temporary Structures by IBC but less than 5 years, usually erected or installed to serve while a permanent location is being constructed, renovated, or otherwise modified. Non-Permanent Buildings and Structures include a range of structure types (relocatable buildings, shipping containers, modular structure/trailers for occupancy, mobile/transportable medical units, equipment buildings/enclosures, covered walkways, etc.) for a range of non-permanent purposes (swing spaces, short term expansion etc.).

Non-Permanent Buildings/Structures must comply with the applicable building codes, standards and regulations (i.e. IBC, NFPA, etc.) for the building/structure type being constructed. VA standards and criteria are applicable on a case-by-case basis for Non-Permanent Buildings/Structures and require interpretation by the appropriate committee of multi-discipline subject matter experts as managed through the VHA Healthcare Engineering SharePoint site. Waivers will be adjudicated by the AHJ.

Temporary Building/Structure: Any building or structure in use for 180 days or less (or up to 1 year with exception) as defined in IBC.

Temporary Buildings/Structures must comply with IBC Chapter 31 Temporary Structures. VA standards and criteria are applicable on a case-by-case basis for Temporary Buildings/Structures and require interpretation by the appropriate committee of multi-discipline subject matter experts as managed through the VHA Healthcare Engineering SharePoint site. Waivers will be adjudicated by the AHJ.

Interpretations or deviations: Interpretations, definition of requirements, or deviations from any VA standards and criteria for a Non-Permanent or Temporary Building/Structure must be evaluated and adjudicated by the appropriate committee of multi-discipline subject matter experts as managed through the VHA Healthcare Engineering SharePoint site.

AUTHORITY HAVING JURISDICTION

In accordance with Title 38 USC 312A, the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for planning, design, and construction (PDC) of facilities for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including determining architectural and engineering requirements and ensuring compliance of the Department with applicable laws relating to the construction program of the Department, is the Executive Director (ED) of the Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM). This authority includes the delegation of authority to the Administrations for their projects. The VA/VHA project manager, project engineer, or COR must obtain AHJ identification, contact information and the process and procedures for compliance reviews, evaluations, and adjudications no later than initiation of the contract.

CONTACT: Fred Lau at fred.lau@va.gov
Facilities Standards Service at til@va.gov

