

# How do I become a certified... North Carolina Plumbing Code Inspector\*?



The [NC Code Officials Qualifications Board \(COQB\)](#) certifies qualified individuals to serve as code officials employed by local and state government. Staff provided by the NC Dept. of Insurance (NCDI), Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) evaluate all applications and supporting documentation, determine eligibility to register for the state exam, and make recommendations for certification to the Board quarterly.

The application process begins by creating a username and password online through the [SYSTEM LOG-IN](#) link on the [OSFM web site](#) unless you already have an ID number. Please contact Terri Tart via email at [terri.tart@ncdoi.gov](mailto:terri.tart@ncdoi.gov) or phone (919) 662-4480 x 274 with questions.

[NOTE: Also accessible through the NCDI homepage [www.ncdoi.com](http://www.ncdoi.com), **Office of State Fire Marshal** dropdown selection, **Engineering and Codes**, Code Enforcement Officials (CEO) Certification Tools.]

Individuals seeking certification must complete the application and provide sufficient documentation to support all education and experience claimed to meet the minimum requirements applicable to the Level of certification sought.

All applicants must successfully complete the board's standard course for the level which they qualify by their education and experience as provided by Board Rule **11 NCAC 08.0706**. All applicants must also successfully complete the board standard course in [Law and Administration](#). This is a 15-hour course that is applicable to all levels of certification. The NC Community College System serves as the education sponsor for all standard courses. Applicants must register for the standard course they plan to attend by contacting the specific community college education coordinator or instructor offering the course. A list of scheduled courses is available through the OSFM web site. Course credit is applied upon successful completion when the course roster is submitted.

Occupancy Classification**	Level I	Level II	Level III
<b>Assembly</b>	1 story/ 7,500 sf	1 story/20,000 sf	Unlimited
<b>Business</b>	1 story/20,000 sf	1 story/60,000 sf Multi-story: 4 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Education</b>	1 story/ 7,500 sf	1 story/20,000 sf Multi-story: 2 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Hazardous</b>	1 story/ 3,000 sf	1 story/20,000 sf Multi-story: 2 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Factory Industrial</b>	1 story/20,000 sf	1 story/60,000 sf Multi-story: 4 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Institutional</b>	1 story/ 7,500 sf	1 story/10,000 sf Multi-story: 3 stories max/10,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Mercantile</b>	1 story/20,000 sf	1 story/60,000 sf Multi-story: 4 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Residential Multi-unit 1 &amp; 2 family dwellings, townhouses</b>	1 story/ 7,500 sf  Unlimited	3 stories max/no restriction on floor area  Unlimited	Unlimited  Unlimited
<b>Storage</b>	1 story/20,000 sf	1 story/60,000 sf Multi-story: 4 stories max/20,000 sf per floor	Unlimited
<b>Utility and Miscellaneous</b>	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited

- \* A Plumbing Code Inspector typically takes an oath to perform duties as a Code Enforcement Official for a jurisdiction.
- \*\* See the Building Code for Occupancy classifications.

## **11 NCAC 08 .0706                      REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS: TYPES AND LEVELS**

- (b) Whenever a provision of the Rules in this Section requires a supporting letter (maximum of two per level) from a supervisor, the letter(s) shall be notarized, shall state the supervisor's qualifications (i.e., what type and level of certificate or license the supervisor holds), shall state that the applicant has worked under the supervisor's direct supervision for a specified period of time, and shall recommend certification of the applicant as a specified type and level of inspector upon satisfaction of other required qualifications. The supervisor shall describe the name, floor area, and number of stories of the buildings worked on by the applicant and shall describe the work performed by the applicant.
- (c) References in the rules in this Section to professional engineer or licensed engineer means engineers licensed by the North Carolina State Board of Examiners for Engineers and Surveyors pursuant to G.S. 89C. References in the rules in this Section to registered architect means architects licensed by the Board of Architecture pursuant to Chapter 83A of the North Carolina General Statutes. References to licensed building, residential, electrical, heating, plumbing, and fire sprinkler contractors means contractors licensed by the State Licensing Board for General Contractors, the N.C. State Board of Examiners of Electrical Contractors, or the N.C. State Board of Examiners of Plumbing, Heating and Fire Sprinkler Contractors pursuant to Chapter 87 of the North Carolina General Statutes. References to licensed "building" contractors do not include licensed "residential" contractors. Specialty licenses issued by these occupational licensing boards are not acceptable. Applicants with licenses from other states or countries must provide a copy of their license and documentation that the requirements of the other state are at least equivalent to the statewide licensing requirements of North Carolina occupational licensing boards.
- (d) Whenever a provision of the rules in this Section requires the possession of an occupational license other than those certificates that are issued by the Board, if that license is inactive, the applicant must provide documentation from the appropriate occupational licensing board that the applicant previously held the license and that the license is currently inactive.
- (e) Whenever a provision of the rules in this Section requires inspector experience on a minimum number of buildings or systems, the experience must include all the inspections typically performed by an inspector during construction of the building or system. Inspections do not have to be performed on the same building.
- (f) Whenever a provision of the rules in this Section requires a high school education or other education and experience qualifications, the Board may approve equivalent qualifications. Whenever a provision of the Rules in this Section requires the possession of a diploma or degree from an accredited college, university, or trade school, accredited shall mean accreditation from a regional accrediting association, for example, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- (g) Every applicant shall:
  - (1) provide documentation that the applicant possesses a minimum of a high school education or a high school equivalency certificate (i.e. GED); and
  - (2) provide notarized certification by a city or county manager, clerk, or director of inspection department that the applicant will be performing "code enforcement", as defined in G.S. 143-151.8(a)(3), as an employee of that city or county; or provide certification by the head of the Engineering and Building Codes Division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance that the applicant will be performing "code enforcement", as defined in G.S. 143-151.8(a)(3), for a state department or agency; and
  - (3) make a grade of at least 70 on courses developed by the Board. Successful completion is defined as attendance of a minimum of 80 percent of the hours taught and achieving a minimum score of 70 percent on the course exam. All applicants must successfully complete a law and administration course. Applicants for certification in building, electrical, fire prevention, mechanical, or plumbing inspection at levels I, II, or III must successfully complete a course in that area and level (or a higher level). For the purpose of entry into the state examination, courses must be completed within five years of the exam in Subparagraph (g)(4) of this Rule. These courses shall be administered and taught in the N.C. Community College System or other educational agencies accredited by a regional accrediting association; for example, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; and
  - (4) achieve a passing grade of 70 percent on the written examination administered by the Board in each level of certification unless exempt by 11 NCAC 08.0707.

(q) **Plumbing Inspector, Level I.** A standard certificate, plumbing inspector, Level I, shall be issued to any applicant who complies with Paragraphs (b) through (g) of this Rule and who provides documentation that the applicant possesses one of the following education and experience qualifications:

- (1) a one-year diploma in plumbing construction from an accredited college or an equivalent apprenticeship or trade school program in plumbing construction;
- (2) a four-year degree from an accredited college or university;
- (3) at least six months of plumbing inspection experience with a probationary Level I plumbing inspection certificate on a minimum of two Level I buildings while working under the direct supervision of a standard certified plumbing inspector I, II, or III with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
- (4) at least one year of plumbing design, construction, or inspection experience on a minimum of two Level I buildings while working under the direct supervision of a licensed engineer or licensed Class I plumbing contractor with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
- (5) a Class I license as a plumbing contractor;
- (6) at least two years of plumbing installation or inspection experience while working under a licensed Class I plumbing contractor; or
- (7) at least two years of experience with a probationary Level I plumbing inspection certificate inspecting plumbing installations a minimum of two Level I buildings.

(r) **Plumbing Inspector, Level II.** A standard certificate, plumbing inspector, Level II, shall be issued to any applicant who complies with Paragraphs (b) through (g) of this Rule and who provides documentation that the applicant possesses one of the following education and experience qualifications:

- (1) a license as a professional engineer;
- (2) a four-year degree from an accredited college or university in mechanical engineering or mechanical or plumbing construction;
- (3) a four-year degree from an accredited college or university and at least two years of plumbing design, construction, or inspection experience on a minimum of two Level II buildings while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector II or III, licensed engineer, or licensed Class I plumbing contractor;
- (4) a two year degree from an accredited college or university in mechanical engineering or mechanical or plumbing construction and at least two years of plumbing design, construction, or inspection experience on a minimum of two Level II buildings while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector II or III, licensed engineer, or licensed Class I plumbing contractor;
- (5) a Class I license as a plumbing contractor with experience on a minimum of two Level II buildings;
- (6) at least three years of plumbing inspection experience including one year of inspection experience with a probationary Level II plumbing inspection certificate on a minimum of two Level II buildings while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector II or III with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
- (7) at least three years of plumbing design, construction, or inspection experience on a minimum of two Level II buildings while working under the direct supervision of a licensed engineer or licensed Class I plumbing contractor with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule; or
- (8) at least two years of experience with a probationary Level II plumbing inspection certificate inspecting plumbing installations on a minimum of two Level II buildings.

(s) **Plumbing Inspector, Level III.** A standard certificate, plumbing inspector, Level III shall be issued to any applicant who complies with Paragraphs (b) through (g) of this Rule and who provides documentation that the applicant possesses one of the following education and experience qualifications:

- (1) a license as a professional engineer with design, construction, or inspection experience on Level III buildings and specialization in mechanical engineering;
- (2) a four-year degree from an accredited university in mechanical engineering or mechanical or plumbing construction and at least one year of plumbing design, installation, or inspection experience while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector III, licensed engineer, or licensed Class I plumbing contractor at least at the level of supervisor in responsible charge of a minimum of two Level III buildings;
- (3) a two-year degree from an accredited college or university in mechanical engineering or plumbing construction and at least three years of plumbing design, installation, or inspection experience while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector III, licensed engineer, or licensed Class I plumbing contractor with at least one year at the level of supervisor in responsible charge of a minimum of two Level III buildings;
- (4) a Class I license as a plumbing contractor with experience on a minimum of two Level III buildings;
- (5) at least four years of plumbing inspection experience including one year of inspection experience with a probationary Level III plumbing inspection certificate on a minimum of two Level III buildings while working under the direct supervision of a certified plumbing inspector III with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
- (6) at least four years of plumbing design, construction, or inspection experience while working under the direct supervision of a licensed engineer or licensed Class I plumbing contractor, two years of which have been performed at the level of supervisor in responsible charge of a minimum of two Level III buildings with a supporting letter from the applicant's supervisor which complies with Paragraph (b) of this Rule; or
- (7) at least one year of experience with a probationary Level III plumbing inspection certificate inspecting the plumbing installations of a minimum of two Level III buildings.

**11 NCAC 08 .0707 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

- (a) **Licensed County Electrical Inspector.** Pursuant to G.S. 143-151.13(e), the Board will, without requiring an examination, issue a standard certificate to any person holding a currently valid certificate as a county electrical inspector, issued by the Commissioner of Insurance under G.S. 153A-351. Such certificate shall be for the electrical inspector level corresponding to the level at which the applicant is currently certified.
- (b) **Registered Architect, Licensed General Contractor, Licensed Plumbing or Heating Contractor, Licensed Electrical Contractor, Registered Professional Engineer.** Pursuant to G.S. 143-151.13(f), the Board will, without requiring an examination, issue a standard certificate to any person who successfully completes the Board's prescribed short course concerning state building code regulations and code enforcement administration and who is currently registered or licensed (as of June 13, 1977) by the State of North Carolina as an architect, a general contractor, a plumbing or heating contractor, an electrical contractor, or a professional engineer. The standard certificate thus issued will authorize the person to practice as a qualified code enforcement official of the type and at the performance level determined by the Board to be appropriate in light of the applicant's education, training, and experience.
- (c) **Certified Code Enforcement Official From Another State.** Pursuant to G.S. 143-151.14, the Board will, without requiring an examination, issue a standard certificate to any person who successfully completes the Board's prescribed short course concerning state building code regulations and code enforcement administration and who holds a currently valid certificate as a qualified code enforcement official from another state or territory whose standards are acceptable to the Board and not lower than those required of North Carolina applicants.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 143-151.13; 143-151.14;  
Eff. January 15, 1980;  
Amended Eff. July 1, 1983.*

**11 NCAC 08.0602 NATURE OF PROBATIONARY CERTIFICATE**

(a) A probationary certificate **may be** issued, without examination, to any newly-employed or newly-promoted CEO who lacks a standard certificate that covers the new position. **A probationary certificate shall be issued for two years only and may not be renewed.** The official shall take whatever measures are necessary during the two year period to qualify for an appropriate standard certificate. A probationary certificate authorizes the official, during the effective period of the certificate, to hold the position of the type, level, and location specified. The certificate shall be conditioned on the applicant’s completion of a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate and meeting one of the following:

- (1) Working under supervision sufficient to protect the public health and safety;
- (2) Possessing a minimum of 2 years of design, construction, or inspection experience working under a certified inspector or under a licensed professional engineer, registered architect or licensed contractor.
- (3) Possessing one of the experience qualifications listed in 11 NCAC 08.0706 in each area of code enforcement for which the probationary certificate is issued; or
- (4) Successfully completing a probationary prequalification exam administered by the Board in each area of code enforcement for which the probationary certificate is issued.

(b) A probationary certificate **shall be issued** if the board determines that the applicant may obtain the experience required by Paragraph (a)(3) of this Rule before the expiration of the probationary certificate.

**11 NCAC 08 .0711 PRE-QUALIFICATION PROGRAM**

The Board may prequalify, as an inspector, an applicant who is not an employee of a city, county or state inspection department. The Board shall accept applicants who meet the same education, experience, and other requirements listed in Rules .0702 through .0707 of this Section. The Board shall prequalify the applicant at the area and level of certification when the applicant completes these requirements. The Board shall issue a standard inspection certificate when the prequalified applicant is employed by a city, county or state inspection department.

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**STANDARD INSPECTION COURSES ARE OFFERED THROUGH THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM:**

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Community colleges teaching any of the Qualification Board’s standard inspection courses are required to use the following course numbers and titles which have been established by the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges:

COD 3101	Law and Administration	15 hours
COD 3140	Plumbing Standard Inspection Level I	32 hours
COD 3141	Plumbing Standard Inspection Level II	24 hours
COD 3142	Mechanical Standard Inspection Level III	16 hours

All scheduled courses are listed on the OSFM web page entitled [Code Education Resources](#) by selecting the “[FIND A CLASS](#)” button. This will allow listing of all approved courses currently scheduled by sponsors and instructors. You may search and create lists of courses scheduled by Trade, Course Type and Format. Courses are listed in date order. Applicants and code officials are encouraged to check this list often as new courses are constantly being scheduled throughout the year.