

# History of Building Codes

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Building codes have been around since the Babylonian Empire around the year 2,000 B.C. The Roman Empire also realized the importance of building codes for public places after the collapse of an amphitheater that killed or injured approximately 50,000 people in 27 A.D. Unfortunately for the Romans, only 37 years later Rome burned down. Cause of the fire has created many historical debates, but the poorly constructed buildings were probably part of the problem.

In 1189, London, England's mayor promoted the use of building codes that regulated the method of building party walls with stone and their use. This type of wall acted as fireproof material. Unfortunately, it is unknown as to what degree these codes were followed. In 1212, a fire broke out in London that caused partial destruction to the city. And in 1666, there was the great fire that burned out of control for five days and caused partial destruction to some 15,000 buildings. Because of the fire another building code was written but was out of date as soon as it was written. By the time Parliament acted on this code, London was already under reconstruction which went unregulated as there was no effective enforcement of any codes.

In the United States, there was the Chicago fire of 1871 which lasted almost two days, killed 250 people, destroyed 17,000 buildings and left 100,000 people homeless. The city enacted a building code and fire prevention code in 1875.

Throughout history, the adoption of building codes came as a last step instead of the first. That is why it is so important for the enforcement of building codes to avoid tragedies like those in the past.