

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1993 SESSION

CHAPTER 329
SENATE BILL 164

AN ACT TO CLARIFY THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE THE AUTHORITY
TO IMPOSE CIVIL PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE FIRE
PREVENTION CODE OF THE STATE BUILDING CODE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 143-138(h) reads as rewritten:

"(h) Violations. – Any person who shall be adjudged to have violated this Article or the North Carolina State Building Code, except for violations of occupancy limits established by either, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall upon conviction be liable to a fine, not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), for each offense. Each 30 days that such violation continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense. Violation of occupancy limits established pursuant to the North Carolina State Building Code shall be a misdemeanor subject to a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) fine for a first offense, a two hundred fifty dollar (\$250.00) fine for a second offense, and a five hundred dollar (\$500.00) fine and up to 30 days imprisonment for a third and any subsequent offenses. Any violation incurred more than one year after another conviction for violation of the occupancy limits shall be treated as a first offense for purposes of establishing and imposing penalties. ~~In case any building or structure is erected, constructed or reconstructed, or its purpose altered, so that it becomes in violation of the North Carolina State Building Code or if the occupancy limits established pursuant to the North Carolina State Building Code are exceeded, either the local enforcement officer or the State Commissioner of Insurance or other State official with responsibility under G.S. 143-139 may, in addition to other remedies, institute any appropriate action or proceedings including the civil remedies set out in G.S. 160A-175 and G.S. 153A-123, (i) to prevent such unlawful erection, construction or reconstruction or alteration of purpose, or overcrowding, (ii) to restrain, correct, or abate such violation, or (iii) to prevent the occupancy or use of said building, structure or land until such violation is corrected.~~"

Sec. 2. G.S. 143-139 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-139. Enforcement of Building Code.

(a) Procedural Requirements. – Subject to the provisions set forth herein, the Building Code Council shall adopt such procedural requirements in the North Carolina State Building Code as shall appear reasonably necessary for adequate enforcement of the Code while safeguarding the rights of persons subject to the Code.

(b) General Building Regulations. – The Insurance Commissioner shall have general supervision, through the Division of Engineering of the Department of

Insurance, of the administration and enforcement of all sections of the North Carolina State Building Code pertaining to plumbing, electrical systems, general building restrictions and regulations, heating and air conditioning, fire protection, and the construction of buildings generally, except those sections of the Code, the enforcement of which is specifically allocated to other agencies by subsections (c) and (d) below. The Insurance Commissioner, by means of the Division of Engineering, shall exercise his duties in the enforcement of the North Carolina State Building Code (including local building codes which have superseded the State Building Code in a particular political subdivision pursuant to G.S. 143-138(e)) in cooperation with local officials and local inspectors duly appointed by the governing body of any municipality or board of county commissioners pursuant to Part 5 of Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes or Part 4 of Article 18 of Chapter 153A of the General Statutes, or any other applicable statutory authority.

(b1) Remedies. – In case any building or structure is maintained, erected, constructed, or reconstructed or its purpose altered, so that it becomes in violation of this Article or of the North Carolina State Building Code, either the local enforcement officer or the State Commissioner of Insurance or other State official with responsibility under this section may, in addition to other remedies, institute any appropriate action or proceeding to: (i) prevent the unlawful maintenance, erection, construction, or reconstruction or alteration of purpose, or overcrowding, (ii) restrain, correct, or abate the violation, or (iii) prevent the occupancy or use of the building, structure, or land until the violation is corrected. In addition to the civil remedies set out in G.S. 160A-175 and G.S. 153A-123, a county, city, or other political subdivision authorized to enforce the North Carolina State Building Code within its jurisdiction may, for the purposes stated in (i) through (iii) of this subsection, levy a civil penalty for violation of the fire prevention code of the North Carolina State Building Code, which penalty may be recovered in a civil action in the nature of debt if the offender does not pay the penalty within a prescribed period of time after the offender has been cited for the violation. If the Commissioner or other State official institutes an action or proceeding under this section, a county, city, or other political subdivision may not institute a civil action under this section based upon the same violation. Appeals from the imposition of any remedy set forth herein, including the imposition of a civil penalty by a county, city, or other political subdivision, shall be as provided in G.S. 160A-434.

(c) Boilers. – The Bureau of Boiler Inspection of the Department of Labor shall have general supervision of the administration and enforcement of those sections of the North Carolina State Building Code which pertain to boilers of the types enumerated in Article 7 of Chapter 95 of the General Statutes.

(d) Elevators. – The Department of Labor shall have general supervision of the administration and enforcement of those sections of the North Carolina State Building Code which pertain to elevators, moving stairways, and amusement devices such as merry-go-rounds, roller coasters, Ferris wheels, etc."

Sec. 3. G.S. 143-138(e) reads as rewritten:

"(e) Effect upon Local Codes. – The North Carolina State Building Code shall apply throughout the State, from the time of its adoption. However, any political

subdivision of the State may adopt a building code or building rules and regulations governing construction or a fire prevention code within its jurisdiction. The territorial jurisdiction of any municipality or county for this purpose, unless otherwise specified by the General Assembly, shall be as follows: Municipal jurisdiction shall include all areas within the corporate limits of the municipality and extraterritorial jurisdiction areas established as provided in G.S. 160A-360 or a local act; county jurisdiction shall include all other areas of the county. No such code or regulations, other than those permitted by G.S. 160A-436, shall be effective until they have been officially approved by the Building Code Council as providing adequate minimum standards to preserve and protect health and safety, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (c) above. While it remains effective, such approval shall be taken as conclusive evidence that a local code or local regulations supersede the State Building Code in its particular political subdivision. Whenever the Building Code Council adopts an amendment to the State Building Code, it shall consider any previously approved local regulations dealing with the same general matters, and it shall have authority to withdraw its approval of any such local code or regulations unless the local governing body makes such appropriate amendments to that local code or regulations as it may direct. In the absence of approval by the Building Code Council, or in the event that approval is withdrawn, local codes and regulations shall have no force and effect. Provided any local regulations approved by the local governing body which are found by the Council to be more stringent than the adopted statewide fire prevention code and which are found to regulate only activities and conditions in buildings, structures, and premises that pose dangers of fire, explosion or related hazards, and are not matters in conflict with the State Building Code, shall be approved. Local governments may enforce the fire prevention code of the State Building Code using civil remedies authorized under G.S. 143-139, 153A-123, and 160A-175. If the Commissioner of Insurance or other State official with responsibility for enforcement of the Code institutes a civil action pursuant to G.S. 143-139, a local government may not institute a civil action under G.S. 143-139, 153A-123, or 160A-175 based upon the same violation. Appeals from the assessment or imposition of such civil remedies shall be as provided in G.S. 160A-434."

Sec. 4. G.S. 160A-175 is amended by adding the following new subsection to read:

"(c1) An ordinance may provide for the recovery of a civil penalty by the city for violation of the fire prevention code of the State Building Code as authorized under G.S. 143-139."

Sec. 5. G.S. 153A-123 is amended by adding the following new subsection to read:

"(c1) An ordinance may provide for the recovery of a civil penalty by the county for violation of the fire prevention code of the State Building Code as authorized under G.S. 143-139."

Sec. 6. This act is effective upon ratification and applies to violations committed on or after that date.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 13th day of July, 1993.

Dennis A. Wicker
President of the Senate

Daniel Blue, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives