

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-25-00

April 14, 2000

The following is offered in response to your letter in which you request an interpretation of the provisions of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code portion of the 1999 State Building Code with respect to retaining walls. You state that the CABO Code does not specifically address retaining walls and set forth a scenario where a retaining wall that is 200 feet in length and 5 feet in height was constructed 50 feet from a house constructed under the CABO code, on the same property.

Question: Does the retaining wall require a design prepared by a registered design professional?

Answer: Section 108.1 of the referenced code states in part that the code is not intended to prevent the installation of any material or prohibit any method of construction not specifically prescribed by the code. This section goes on to state that the alternative material or method of construction shall be approved when the code official finds that the proposed design is satisfactory or that the work is the equivalent of that prescribed in the code in quality, strength, durability and safety. In the case you present, an evaluation of the retaining wall must be made by the code official and a determination made as to the structural adequacy of the proposed design. If the code official is unsure of the strength and safety of the structural design, it would be appropriate to request that the design be prepared by a professional engineer in accordance with the applicable statutes concerning licensure.