

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*  
*Department of Fire Services*



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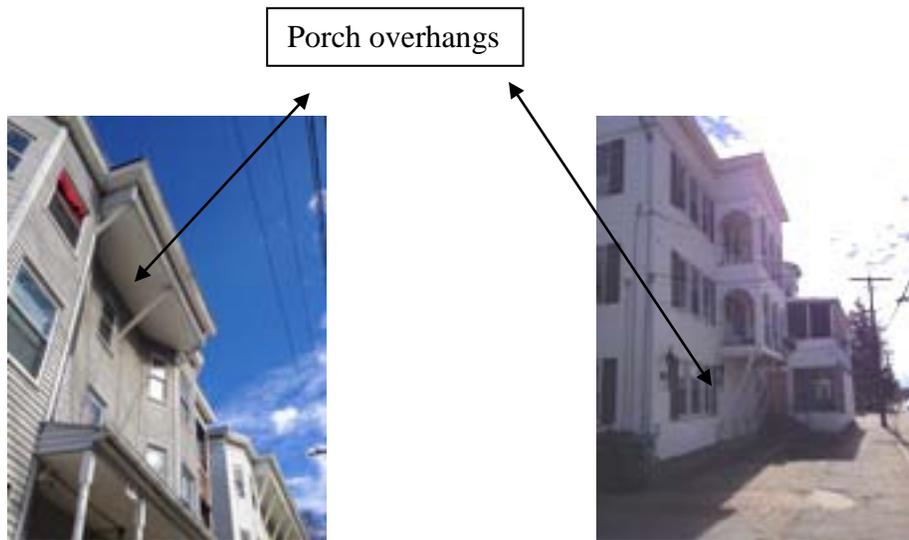
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STEPHEN D. COAN  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Heads of Fire Department  
 From: Stephen D. Coan  
 State Fire Marshal  
 Date: September 1, 2013  
 RE: **Awareness of Porch Hazards**

The Department of Fire Services has recently received information that could pose a safety risk to firefighters operating at a building fire. In some communities, fire officials are seeing porches removed from multi-family dwelling (a/k/a three deckers), in lieu of costly rebuilding or extensive repairs. When porches are removed, it results in an overhang that must be properly braced and supported. We are aware of at least once instance, in which an overhang collapsed near responding firefighters, who were making entry at a building fire. Below are two examples to further illustrate the issue:



It is imperative that you work with local building officials if you have any concerns with any work completed or currently under construction regarding these or similar porches.

These repairs/renovations are subject to the State Building Code - Commercial Building Code (Chapter 34) and its reference to the *2009 International Existing Building Code*. This code requires that the repairs need to include verification that the overhang meets the required snow and wind loads for the subject area.

The second consideration is to bring awareness of this situation to responding personnel and the need to consider these “renovated” roof structures and potentially unsupported porches during size-up and establishment of adequate collapse zones.

If you have any further questions please contact the Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit or Fire Protection Engineers by calling (978) 567-3375 or in Western, Massachusetts at (413) 587-3181.