

Fremont

Building Official

Code Enforcement

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Highlights for 2009 IRC Effective April 1, 2010

This document provides assistance to the building community in identifying a number of specific code changes that have occurred with the transition from the 2006 version of the IRC (International Residential Code) to the recently adopted 2009 IRC. While these listed changes are only a portion of the total number of changes, I feel they represent the bulk of those practices that frequently encountered during the construction of one- and two-family dwelling units. The IRC is one in a family of International Codes published by the ICC (International Code Council). The IRC is a comprehensive residential code establishing the minimum provisions for residential building.

-Increase of allowed size for “free-standing” deck assemblies which do not require permitting according to IRC exemptions. Decks not exceeding 200 square feet and less than 30 inches above grade and not attached to a dwelling and do not serve the exit door. This provision however, remains in conflict with local zoning that only exempts structures less than 100 square feet.

-A new definition and allowable area termed “habitable attic” has been created; which provides for certain provisions allowing for a habitable attic space to be part of a dwelling structure without being counted as a story above grade. This is significant in that the IRC only recognizes buildings that are 3 stories or less above grade.

-SIPs (Structural Insulated Panels) are prescriptively limited to construction of 2 stories above grade plane and not more than 10 foot wall height.

-Each townhouse is required to be separated by fire-resistance-rated wall assemblies of not less than 1-hour rating. The wall must be rated for exposure from both sides. This is reduced from the previous code requirement of a 2-hour rated common wall; this change is coupled with the revised requirement for automotive fire sprinkler system installation in all townhouses. While this is not effective immediately within the NH Building Code, the requirement for fire sprinkler systems in Townhouses has been a standing requirement for a number of years.

-The method of measurement for means of egress within a residential dwelling has been modified to reflect a “net clear opening” minimum width of 32 inches.

-Whenever fixed bench seating is provided upon deck areas the guard height requirement is to be measured from the height of the bench seating. This effectively requires a minimum 36 inch guard at the bench seating.

-Effective January 1, 2012 (as modified by the NH Building Code) an automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall be installed in one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured homes. A properly installed and maintained automatic fire sprinkler system increases the likelihood of occupants escaping during a household fire.

-Carbon monoxide detectors are now required, in all new construction, to be installed outside of each separate sleeping area in the vicinity of the bedrooms. This has been effective through the NH State Fire Code since January 2010.

-Buildings and structures located in the floodplain shall be elevated to a minimum of one above the base flood elevation or at the design flood elevation, whichever is higher. While this is specific to orientation of the structure relative to the flood waters a plus one foot “free-board” is a wise minimum protective for the placement of the lowest floor level. Basements that are below grade on all sides are prohibited. These provisions are not significant changes to the practices in place for re-building within the identified flood prone areas today in Fremont.

-Buildings are now required by code to have approved address numbers affixed to the building. This has been an enforced requirement in new construction in Fremont for a number of years.

-Prescriptive methods for securing wood decks to building structures are now directly referenced in the IRC. These included methods do not change the effective practices in place for most deck construction today but do provide for a reference source of identifying the minimum requirements for attachment of decks.

-Drilling and notching of top plates now require the metal tie to extend a minimum of 6 inches past the created opening (drilled or notched area). While this is a minor implication it greatly effects the type of materials used when providing protection for drilling and notching which must also extend below the top plate by a minimum of 2 inches – as in plumbing vent or other piping protected by the so called BOCA plates.

-A minimum of 50% of the lamps in permanently installed lighting fixtures must be high efficacy lamps. The code is now directly involved in placement of high efficacy lamps (i.e. compact fluorescent bulbs) throughout the lighting fixtures. This is a mandate of the energy bill requirement complete replacement by year 2012. Compact fluorescents use approximately 80% less energy and last 6 to 10 times longer than standard incandescent lighting.

-When a dryer exhaust duct is installed in a concealed space (i.e. within a wall or floor assembly) the code now requires a permanent sign, label, or tag identifying the total length of the installed exhaust duct. A dryer exhaust duct system must be installed for all new construction. Exhaust ducts shall be a minimum of 4" and have smooth internal surfaces. Except for the added requirement for the signage of concealed ducts this has been the existing practice in new builds.

-Radiant floor heating systems must be installed with a thermal barrier where the heated slab meets the foundation wall. Heated slab on grade installations must have a minimum R-5 insulation installed beneath the piping. Heated suspended floors must have a minimum R-11 installed. Where the energy code requires additional R-value the higher values shall be used.

-All gas piping must enter the building above grade. This effectively moves all gas piping penetrations to visible placements above grade.