



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Jackie Broach, public information officer

Phone: (843) 545-3164

E-mail: jbroach@gtcounty.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County staff offers answers on changes to building codes

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — When revisions to international residential building codes went into effect in South Carolina earlier this month, there were some major changes for local builders, touching on everything from fire sprinklers to stair risers.

Information about these changes was sent out in advance to builders, architects, engineers and other professionals on the Georgetown County Building Department's mailing list, but county staff is also available to answer questions about changes to the code.

"In most every code cycle you get one to several major changes," said Mike Young, the county's chief building inspector.

He outlined seven significant changes that went into effect in this cycle. They are as follows:

- **R301.2.1.2, Wind-borne Debris Protection.** Requirement for covering openings on homes were made more stringent. Impact glass or rated shutters are still acceptable coverings for windows during a storm. However, if plywood is used as a covering, it now must be pre-cut and pre-drilled with the hardware installed, and ready to be affixed to the house.

- **R302.2, Townhouses.** A change to this section of the code makes an exception to a rule that requires new townhouses to have fire sprinklers. Under the new code if a two-hour fire resistant rated wall is placed between townhouse units, automatic fire sprinklers are not required.

- **R303.4, Mechanical Ventilation.** Requirement of what is known as the "blower door test" was deleted. The test is used to determine if and where a home may be leaking air before a certificate of occupancy is issued. The blower door test can still be used if a builder wishes, but the change allows other methods to be used in its place.

- **R311.7.5.1, Risers.** While the maximum height for stair risers is set at 7 ³/₄ inches, the revised code makes an allowance for risers on masonry stairs to be up to 8 inches. Open risers are permitted, but only for stairs 30 inches or less in height.

- **R313.2, One- and Two-family Dwellings Automatic Fire Systems.** Requirement for sprinkler systems in all one- and two-family homes was deleted.

- **R315.1, Carbon Monoxide Alarms.** Any home with any type of natural gas-powered

appliance and/or an attached garage is now required to have carbon monoxide alarms installed.

- **E3902.12 Arc Fault.** An arc fault helps prevent electrocution by shutting down breakers when objects are detected in electrical sockets, such as an item put in by a child. New requirements call for arc faults throughout homes. In the past they were required only in bedrooms. Additionally, tamper-proof outlets are now required.

For more information about the recent changes to the building code, call the building department, (843) 545-3116. That's also the number to call to receive notice of future code changes and other information through the department's mailing list.

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