



FIRE PROTECTION CODES AND GUIDELINES FOR HOMES AND BUSINESS

TASK

Help local fire departments work with their planning boards to get new construction in compliance with the State Fire Code, state statutes, and local building codes and fire safety ordinances to ensure a minimal level of fire safety for home owners and business owners.

DESCRIPTION

Property owners are required to comply with state and local building codes and fire safety regulations. Municipalities issue permits and perform on-site construction and installation inspections to ensure that proper standards have been met. Areas regulated include: roofing materials, electrical systems, heating equipment, flammable and combustible liquid storage, smoke detectors and fire alarm systems, propane and natural gas installations, and outdoor burning of brush and vegetation. Local jurisdictions may adopt requirements that are more stringent than state regulations.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Reduced number of deaths and injuries from fire related accidents.
- Reduced dollar value of damages resulting from fewer occurrences of fires.
- Better quality of life from better built homes

GUIDELINES:

- On roofs of buildings, encourage the use of fire-rated material to reduce the potential of being ignited by brands and embers from wildland fires. Materials should be fire resistant and designed to meet the requirements of UL 790, "Test for Fire Resistance of Roof Covering Material."

- Require a properly installed "fire-stop" between floor levels to stop the spread of fire throughout a building, endangering occupants and resulting in unnecessary damage. Further requirements for fire-stopping in wood frame dwellings are found in Section R-402.7 of the CABO One and Two-Family Dwelling Code.
- Consider requiring initial inspections of all newly installed heating systems and chimneys which if improperly installed can result in structure fires or lethal accumulations of carbon monoxide gas.
- Fire deaths can be reduced if smoke detectors have been properly installed in residential occupancies.
- Permits for outdoor burning of brush should describe the minimum monitoring requirements to reduce potential spreading to structures and wildland areas.
- Electrical systems should be properly designed and installed to meet recommended loadings to reduce potential fire and electrical shock hazards. All electrical systems and wiring must comply with the National Electrical Code (NFPA 70, 1993 edition).
- Clearly identify homes with addresses or street numbers to minimize possible delays in the response from emergency agencies.
- Installations of home heating equipment should be performed by properly trained and technically skilled persons. All equipment must be installed in accordance with the equipment manufacturer's instructions. Oil burning equipment must be installed in accordance with the State Fire Code, NFPA 31, "Standard for the Installation of Oil Burning Equipment". A "Permit to Install"

and a “Permit to Operate” along with an inspection are required from the local fire official for oil burning equipment before being used by the home owner.

- ❑ State law requires at least one electrically powered smoke detector be installed on each floor level of a residential occupancy. Smoke detectors should be tested weekly for proper operation.
- ❑ Each bedroom must have a primary means of escape (door, stairway, or ramp) and a secondary means of escape. If the secondary means is a window, it must be operable from the inside without the use of tools. The window must provide a clear opening of not less than 20 inches in width, 24 inches in height, and 5.7 square inches in area. The bottom of the opening shall be not more than 44 inches off the floor. The NFPA Life Safety Code 101 has further detailed information concerning alternatives.
- ❑ Chimneys and wood stoves must be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the State Fire Code (NFPA 211, Model Code for the Installation and Operation of Solid Fuel Heating Appliances).
- ❑ A permit to conduct open burning is required to be obtained from the local forest fire warden unless the ground is snow covered. Permittees are responsible for controlling the fire spread, and should have an ample water supply available for fire control purposes. Fire Departments can seek restitution for extinguishment costs of an uncontrolled fire.
- ❑ Propane and natural gas heating equipment must be installed in accordance with the State Fire Code (“National Fuel Gas Code”, NFPA 54, and “Liquefied Propane Gas Code”, NFPA 58). Propane storage tanks

must be installed in accordance with the distance tables in NFPA 58.

- ❑ Municipalities should require building permits for residential and commercial properties. The building permit should not be issued until zoning requirements have been met and all pertinent plans have been reviewed and approved (ie. septic system, construction plans, wetlands permits, etc.).
- ❑ Periodic inspections should be conducted during construction at critical points, such as completion of foundation, electrical rough-in, plumbing rough-in, heating system installation, and final occupancy. A certificate of occupancy should be issued only if all requirements have been complied with.

REFERENCES

- National Fire Protection Association Codes
National Fire Protection Association
1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101,
Quincy Mass., 02269-9101 (617) 770-3000
- State Fire Codes,
NH Department of Safety
State Fire Marshal's Office
10 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH, 03301
271-3294

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

- State Fire Marshal's Office
- Local Fire Department
- Local Zoning and Building Regulations
- Local Building Official
- N.H. Fire Prevention Society
- National Fire Protection Association
(*See Directory*)

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