



NEW CASTLE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE

FAQ

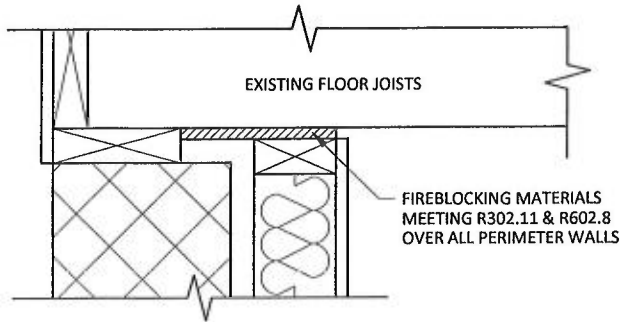
(Frequently Asked Questions)

What is required to convert my unfinished basement to finished space?

1. To convert an unfinished basement to finished space, at least one emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door must be included in all required submissions for permits. Additional means of egress may be needed in applications including sleeping rooms, as per requirements of the 2018 International Residential Code, Section R310.
2. To paint existing block or concrete walls and install carpeting, no permit is required.
3. When new walls or partitions are framed (including perimeter walls), a permit will be required. The drawings to be submitted must include a typical wall section depicting framing, any vapor barrier, insulation, and final finishes. Any ceiling finishes must also be noted.
4. The drawings must show all existing and proposed mechanical systems and clearances from the systems. A mechanical permit will be required for any changes to the HVAC system.

The FAQ series only summarizes or highlights portions of the New Castle County Code. In all applications, the New Castle County Code must be consulted. The language in the Code prevails over the FAQ.

Amended 01/01/2019



SMOKE ALARMS

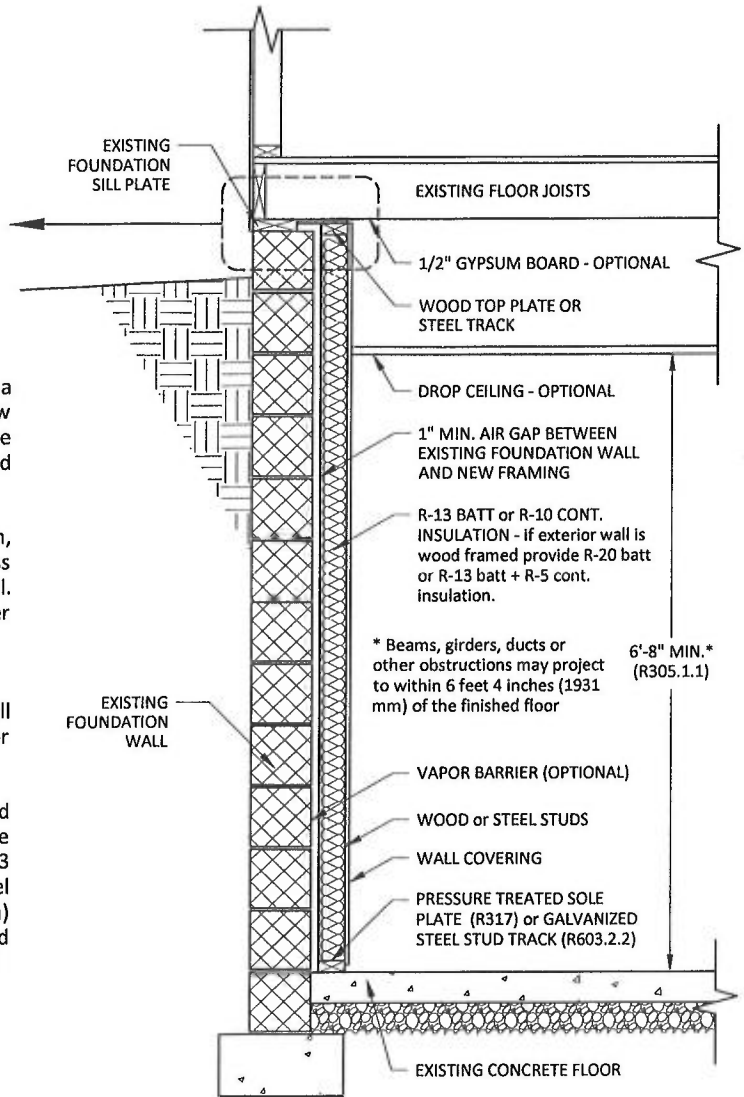
With Bedroom. If the renovation includes a new bedroom(s), a hard-wired interconnected smoke detector is required in each new sleeping room and outside of each new sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms. In addition, battery operated detectors are required in all locations required by the IRC.

Without Bedroom. If the addition does NOT include a new bedroom, a hard-wired smoke detector is required in the new addition unless the existing home has a hard-wired smoke detector on the same level. In addition, battery operated detectors are required in all other locations required by the IRC.

EGRESS

Every basement bedroom or basements with habitable space shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue window or exterior door opening for emergency escape and rescue (R310).

Stairways serving bulkhead enclosures, not part of the required building egress, providing access from the outside grade level to the basement shall be exempt from the requirements of Sections R311.3 and R311.7 where the height from the basement finished floor level to grade adjacent to the stairway is not more than 8 feet (2438 mm) and the grade level opening to the stairway is covered by a bulkhead enclosure with hinged doors or other approved means. (R311.7.10.2)



WOOD WALL FRAMING

R602.5. Interior nonbearing walls. Interior nonbearing walls shall be permitted to be constructed with 2 inch by 3 inch (51 mm by 76 mm) studs spaced 24 inches (610 mm) on center or, when not part of a braced wall line, 2 inch by 4 inch (51 mm by 102 mm) flat studs spaced at 16 inches (406 mm) on center. Interior nonbearing walls shall be capped with at least a single top plate. Interior nonbearing walls shall be fireblocked in accordance with Section R302.11.

R602.7.3 Headers in nonbearing walls. Load-bearing headers are not required in interior or exterior nonbearing walls. A single flat 2-inch by 4-inch (51 mm by 102 mm) member may be used as a header in interior or exterior nonbearing walls for openings up to 8 feet (2438 mm) in width if the vertical distance to the parallel nailing surface above is not more than 24 inches (610 mm). For such nonbearing headers, no cripples or blocking are required above the header.

FIREBLOCKING

R302.11 Fireblocking. In combustible construction, fireblocking shall be provided to cut off all concealed draft openings (both vertical and horizontal) and to form an effective fire barrier between stories, and between a top story and the roof space.

Fireblocking shall be provided in wood-frame construction in the following locations:

1. In concealed spaces of stud walls and partitions, including furred spaces and parallel rows of studs or staggered studs; as follows:
 - 1.1. Vertically at the ceiling and floor levels.
 - 1.2. Horizontally at intervals not exceeding 10 feet (3048 mm).
2. At all interconnections between concealed vertical and horizontal spaces such as occur at soffits, drop ceilings and cove ceilings.
3. In concealed spaces between stair stringers at the top and bottom of the run. Enclosed spaces under stairs shall comply with Section R302.7.
4. At openings around vents, pipes, ducts, cables and wires at ceiling and floor level, with an approved material to resist the free passage of flame and products of combustion. The material filling this annular space shall not be required to meet the ASTM E 136 requirements.
5. For the fireblocking of chimneys and fireplaces, see Section R1003.19.
6. Fireblocking of cornices of a two-family dwelling is required at the line of dwelling unit separation.

R302.11.1 Fireblocking materials. Except as provided in Section R302.11, Item 4, fireblocking shall consist of the following materials:

1. Two-inch (51 mm) nominal lumber.
2. Two thicknesses of 1-inch (25.4 mm) nominal lumber with broken lap joints.
3. One thickness of 23/32-inch (18.3 mm) wood structural panels with joints backed by 23/32-inch (18.3 mm) wood structural panels.
4. One thickness of 3/4-inch (19.1 mm) particleboard with joints backed by 3/4-inch (19.1 mm) particleboard.
5. One-half-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum board.
6. One-quarter-inch (6.4 mm) cement-based millboard.
7. Batts or blankets of mineral wool or glass fiber or other approved materials installed in such a manner as to be securely retained in place.
8. Cellulose insulation installed as tested for the specific application.

R302.11.1.1 Batts of blankets of mineral or glass fiber. Batts or blankets of mineral or glass fiber or other approved nonrigid materials shall be permitted for compliance with the 10 foot (3048 mm) horizontal fireblocking in walls constructed using parallel rows of studs or staggered studs.

R302.11.1.2. Unfaced fiberglass. Unfaced fiberglass batt insulation used as fireblocking shall fill the entire cross section of the wall cavity to a minimum height of 16 inches (406 mm) measured vertically. When piping, conduit or similar obstructions are encountered, the insulation shall be packed tightly around the obstruction.

R302.11.1.3 Loose-fill insulation material. Loose-fill insulation material shall not be used as a fire block unless specifically tested in the form and manner intended for use to demonstrate its ability to remain in place and to retard the spread of fire and hot gases.

LIGHT, VENTILATION AND HEATING

R303.9 Required heating. When the winter design temperature in Table R301.2(1) is below 60°F (16°C), every dwelling unit shall be provided with heating facilities capable of maintaining a minimum room temperature of 68°F (20°C) at a point 3 feet (914 mm) above the floor and 2 feet (610 mm) from exterior walls in all habitable rooms at the design temperature. The installation of one or more portable space heaters shall not be used to achieve compliance with this section.

FUEL-BURNING APPLIANCES IN CONFINED SPACE

304.5.3.1 Combining spaces on the same story. Each opening shall have a minimum free area of 1 square inch per 1,000 Btu/h (2,200 mm²/kW) of the total input rating of all appliances in the space, but not less than 100 square inches (0.06 m²). One opening shall commence within 12 inches (305 mm) of the top and one opening shall commence within 12 inches (305 mm) of the bottom of the enclosure. The minimum dimension of air openings shall be not less than 3 inches (76 mm). (304.5.3.1)

CEILING HEIGHT

R305.1 Minimum height. Habitable space, hallways, bathrooms, toilet rooms and laundry rooms [*] shall have a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet (2134 mm).

Exceptions:

1. For rooms with sloped ceilings, at least 50 percent of the required floor area of the room must have a ceiling height of at least 7 feet (2134 mm) and no portion of the required floor area may have a ceiling height of less than 5 feet (1524 mm).
2. Bathrooms shall have a minimum ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm) at the center of the front clearance area for fixtures as shown in Figure R307.1. The ceiling height above fixtures shall be such that the fixture is capable of being used for its intended purpose. A shower or tub equipped with a showerhead shall have a minimum ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm) above a minimum area 30 inches (762 mm) by 30 inches (762 mm) at the showerhead.

R305.1.1 Basements. [*] basements that [*] contain habitable space, hallways, bathrooms, toilet rooms and laundry rooms shall have a ceiling height of not less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032mm).

Exception: Beams, girders, ducts or other obstructions may project to within 6 feet 4 inches (1931 mm) of the finished floor.