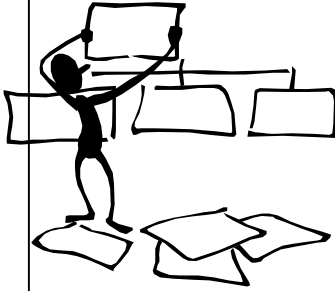


DPIS Newsletter



Wow, what a difference a few months can make in a business plan. I can't remember the last time I've had to deal with so many simultaneous changes at once. It's a tough cookie when Energy Star and the ICC want builders to do more and more while the revenues per unit are becoming less and less. I find myself in the unenviable position of the messenger who faces certain death.

When God opened the doors for the creation of DPIS many years ago, He also blessed me with some good friends who helped me build the company. I remember telling some very large production builders that "it was no problem" for DPIS to handle 100% of their work....I didn't have a clue what I was saying. As the company grew, thankfully these same builders stepped in to explain how things were done in the "big leagues". Because of the wisdom imparted to me by some great leaders of our industry, we were able to establish the infrastructure needed to accommodate the large volume builders.

I have never professed to be the sharpest tool in the bin, but I am smart enough to call those who know more than me. That's how I know that DPIS will have to continue to increase our level of performance in order to compete in this new marketplace. There are no laurels to rest on in this business. We are nearing the end of a 6 month process that will enhance our software, reduce overhead and increase our efficiency in engineering and inspections.

We at DPIS greatly appreciate the opportunities that you have afforded us. We also know that we have to earn your business every day. In a market where less people are responsible for producing more homes, it is easy to forget about quality. My hope is that the pressure to maintain revenues will not supersede your commitment to producing a quality product. For me and the team at DPIS, we are determined to hold to the standards that have set us apart for the past 19 years. If you have suggestions, please email me - dale@dpis.com.

Windstorm



Recent amendments to the upcoming 2009 IRC bode well for builders who build in TDI designated windstorm areas. The engineers at the TDI have always stated that the exposure category for homes built in designated windstorm areas were based on the "time of construction". In other words, unless a lot was completely surrounded by other homes, it would have to be designed to meet the requirements of exposure C. This meant that no consideration could be given to the fact that homes would soon be built around the existing structure. In many cases, the cost difference between exposure B and exposure C was thousands of dollars in materials.

A recent proposed modification by Gary Ehrlich P.E. on behalf of the NAHB has been approved. The modification of Section R301.2.1.4 of the 2006 IRC states "For a site where multiple detached one and two-family dwellings, townhouses or other structures are to be constructed as part of a subdivision, master planned community, or otherwise designated as a developed area by the authority having jurisdiction, the exposure category for an individual structure shall be based upon the site conditions that will exist at the time when all adjacent structures on the site have been constructed, provided their construction is expected to occur within one year of the start of construction for the structure for which the exposure category is determined." This is a great amendment that will help reduce the cost of housing in our southern counties. Please continue to support the NAHB; they really came through for us this time.

Dale Phillips

Heatilator
1915 W. Saunders Street
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

May 22, 2007

Dear Heatilator;

This Heatilator fireplace unit is being installed with framing both below the stand-offs *and* extending past the face of the unit – on both open sides. Is this an approved installation? Is this an approved installation with faux stone façade? Could this ever be an approved installation? If so, under what circumstances?



To: Billy Rogacki
From: Jerry at Heatilator
Date: May 30, 2007

Dear Sir:

I am writing in regard to your letter of 5-22-07.

I have taken this letter to our R&D department and they informed me that this installation would not be approved as shown even with a faux-stone cover. It would be approved if non-combustible framing material (steel studs) was used all around the fireplace.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Sincerely,

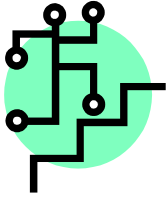
Jerry Keeley
Heatilator Technical Services

Wood framing projecting past the face of the manufactured fireplace unit or below the standoffs fastened to the top of the manufactured fireplace unit put flammable materials in an area that increases the risk of igniting the combustible wood framing. Even if there is a “fireproof” or flame-resistant material between the fireplace and the protruding wood framing, this framing practice is not approved unless the framing itself is fireproof all the way to the ceiling. The “all the way to the ceiling” quote is from a phone conversation that I had with a Vermont Castings representative several years ago.

Even though a Heatilator unit is the fireplace in the example, this ruling would apply to all factory-built fireplace units.

Billy Rogacki

DPIS Newsletter



Attic Access Stairs

Providing attic access has become a “can of worms” issue that we all must address. First of all, the IRC requires that access to attic spaces be provided. There is no requirement for “pull-down” stairs to be provided. The size requirements for attic access openings may be found in section M1305.1.3 of the 2003 IRC. If a builder chooses to provide “pull-down” stairs to access the attic, then the stairs must comply with code. Here is where things get a little confusing. There are differing opinions (even from the ICC staff) on whether or not section 301.5 applies to “pull down” attic stairs. It is my opinion that if this stair can be accessed by the occupants, then it must meet the minimum design requirements of the code. To further complicate things, the City of Houston has amended section M1305.1.3 to require “pull-down” attic stairs with a load capacity of not less than 350 pounds for all attic areas which contain appliances.

You may think this does not affect you because you don’t build in the City of Houston. But here’s another twist; TRCC Rule 304.1(c)(8)(B) states that the applicable version of the IRC is whatever the county seat is using at the time construction of a home begins. Therefore, in all of the unincorporated areas of Harris County, the City of Houston’s version of the IRC is the standard for residential construction. Let’s recap the multitude of considerations that must be considered for this one small item in a home.

1. The IRC **requires** access to attic areas, but does **not require** the installation of a “pull-down” stair.
2. The IRC design criteria for stair treads is 40 lbs per square foot or a 300 lb point load (acting over 4 square inches).
3. The City of Houston **requires** attic access stairs where appliances are located and the stairs must be rated for a load capacity of not less than 350 lbs.
4. The TRCC rules require builders in unincorporated areas of the county to meet the standards set forth by the county seat of that county. In Harris County the county seat is Houston.

Conclusion: In order to comply with the TRCC rules in Harris County, you must have attic access stairs and they must be rated for 350 lbs. In addition, if you choose to install attic access stairs in the unincorporated areas of any other county, they should meet the 300 lb rating as required by the IRC.

Does this amplification of the attic stair issue seem a little convoluted to you? It does to me. The thing that makes my head spin is that this is just one component of the thousands addressed by the IRC, TRCC and municipal amendments. Keeping up with all of the little nuances within each of the governing authorities is almost impossible. I was one of the people who thought that instituting one code under the TRCC would simplify things for the builders. I’ve come to realize that as long as municipal sovereignty supersedes statutory laws, Texas builders will continue to be governed by building code anarchy.

Dale Phillips

Please stay in touch. I am very interested in topics for the radio show.