



From The Home Inspector

New Winston-Salem City Housing Code Rule Regarding Smoke Detectors is now in effect

Since 1992 the W-S Housing Code has mandated that "each occupied dwelling unit shall be required to contain at least one operable smoke detector installed outside the sleeping area, to be located on or near the ceiling." A similar requirement for new home construction has been in the NC Residential Building Code since sometime in the early 1970's.

Are you aware of a new rule that affects all homes in the city limits of Winston-Salem? The rule is in regard to the requirement of smoke detectors that went into effect on February 18, 2010. The amendment was adopted by the city council on August 18, 2008 with an 18 month waiting period prior to taking effect. The rule applies to all homes (new and existing), apartments and condominiums. The NC State Residential Building Code enacted a similar requirement back in the year 2000, but it only applied to new construction and specified that all detectors be interconnected, and that there be a detector on each level in addition to inside sleeping rooms. The rules for new construction and remodeling changes are enforced by Building Code inspectors.

Here is the new rule that will be enforced by the City Housing Authority inspectors:

"Effective 18 months from adoption, each room designed for sleeping purposes, or used for sleeping more than occasionally, or listed as a bedroom on a set of plans and each story, excluding crawl space and attic space, shall be required to contain a smoke detector located on the ceiling and no closer than 12 inches to the intersection of the wall and the ceiling."(Article V Section 10-197 (l) (5) of the W-S Housing Code)

It is certainly wise for all homeowners to protect their family and property from a catastrophic event such as fire. This will have a significant impact on all homes in the city limits and even more so on those listed for sale, as those homes often do not meet the city housing code. Home inspectors do not routinely reference City housing regulations as part of home inspection (there are just too many to inspect). However, an item such as this that received so much publicity and could impact the lives of each city resident would be very important to note. The following link will direct you to a copy of the Winston-Salem City Housing Code online if you'd like more information. <http://www.cityofws.org/Home/Departments/HumanRelations/Articles/FairHousingCode>

To summarize then, after 02/18/2010 every occupied dwelling unit in Winston-Salem should have, at minimum, a ceiling-mounted smoke detector in each sleeping room and a detector, near the ceiling, outside all sleeping rooms. If the dwelling, anywhere in NC, was permitted-to-be-built from about 1970 or later, then the original detector(s) will be powered by 120 v. branch wiring and, at minimum, will be within 15 feet of all sleeping rooms. Newer homes permitted/built anywhere in NC since about 2000 will have interconnected, 120 volt, smoke detectors in each sleeping room and outside those rooms and at every level.

When remodeling an existing home, smoke detector placement and whether they are powered by battery or house current will depend on the amount of work being done. Get guidance from the City/County Inspections Division when remodeling, advises Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Electrical Inspector Mark Tighe.

New Statewide Requirement for Carbon Monoxide Detectors in Rental Properties:

Beginning January 1st, 2010 State law requires that all rental properties having combustion appliances that use fossil fuel (oil, natural gas, LP gas, wood, etc.) have installed carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, mounted near all sleeping rooms and at every level of the dwelling (basement, 1st, 2nd, 3rd floors, but probably not the attic unless useable as living space). There is no State Building Code requirement for CO detectors in new construction, but there may be one soon. Some other states have this requirement, and our NC Building Code Council may mandate it as early as this year.

Respectfully Submitted By Andy Hilton
Hilton Home Inspection, Inc.

Are you interested in serving on the
Home Inspector Committee in 2010?
If so please contact Susan Jester at
sjester@wsrar.com or 768-5560.