



Building Inspection Division
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Code Interpretation: 2015-08

Date: 12/3/2015

Code/ Edition: 2012 International Residential Code (IRC)

Section(s): IBC Chapter 2

Subject: Attics and Habitable Attics

Question: For an attic to be considered a Habitable Attic does it have to meet all three requirements contained in the following definition found in IRC Chapter 2?

Attic, Habitable. A finished or unfinished area, not considered a story, complying with all of the following requirements:

1. The occupiable floor area is at least 70 square feet in accordance with Section R304;
2. The occupiable floor area has a ceiling height in accordance with Section R305;
3. The occupiable space is enclosed by the roof assembly above, knee walls (if applicable) on the sides, and the floor-ceiling assembly below.

Answer: Yes

Commentary: In addition, the space must be designed and/or intended to be used as an "occupiable space"; accessed from either from a door with a minimum height of 6 ft. 6 in. or from permanently constructed stairs complying with Section R311.7 in order to be classified as a Habitable Attic. Should access to the space only be made from a pull down set of stairs or from an access panel in the wall or ceiling, the attic space shall not be considered as a Habitable Attic.

The Habitable Attic space shall also comply with Section R308 for Light, Ventilation and Heating and Section R310 Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings.

Any attic served by fixed stairs and/or doors with a minimum height of 6 ft. 6 in. is required to be designed with a minimum uniformly distributed lived load of thirty (30) pounds per square foot per Table R301.5.

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