

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH FAYETTE

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

RESIDENTIAL FINISHED BASEMENT GUIDE

While the State of Pennsylvania's Building Code does not require a building permit (and thus no inspections) for the renovation or finishing of a basement unless there will be structural work, the home owner is still obligated to meet the requirements of the code for finishing basements. Below is a guide of code requirements to be aware of that may apply to your project. It is important for the home owner to understand that not complying with some of the basic code requirements as listed below could result in significant issues being raised by a home inspector upon selling the home or serious or fatal injury.

- One of the most important requirements for finished basements in new construction is an emergency egress door or window from the habitable area in the basement and any bedrooms directly to the outdoors. An egress window should meet the minimum requirements as follows: (Minimum 20" clear opening width, minimum 24" clear opening height, minimum clear opening of 5 sq' and maximum sill height of 44") A window well may need to be installed. Contact the Building Department for window well requirements.
- Another very important requirement is there should be at least one smoke detector in every bedroom, just outside of the bedroom door and one in the finished area of the basement. Smoke detectors should be hardwired with AC power supply and battery back-up. Smoke detectors should also be interconnected. (Note: If the house is equipped with interconnected smoke detectors, any new detectors added to the finished basement should be connected to the existing interconnected detectors of the home.)
- Even though building inspections are not required, it is suggested to obtain rough-in and final electrical inspections from an approved 3rd party agency and rough-in and final plumbing inspections from Allegheny County Plumbing Inspection Dept.
- Ensure furnaces, water heaters, fire places and other fuel fired appliances have an adequate combustion air supply.
- Ensure all operating and maintenance clearances are maintained for electrical, plumbing and mechanical equipment and flue pipes.
- Bathrooms should either have a window that opens to the outdoors or a fan vented directly to the outdoors.
- Dryer exhausts should be vented separately to the outdoors. Dryer vents should not exceed 25 feet in total length (35 feet for gas dryers) and should not be screwed together. Flex duct should only be used to connect the dryer to the main duct. Protection plates should be installed when located within framing.
- Ensure habitable rooms are at least 70sq' and have a minimum ceiling height of 7 feet.
- Tempered glass should be used for any doors with glazing or any windows that are installed within 24 inches of an existing door.
- Access panels should be installed for plumbing cleanouts and shut off valves for gas and water supplies.
- The underside of the basement stairs should be covered with drywall if they will be enclosed for storage.
- Make sure to not cover any floor drains.
- New interior doors should be at least 30" in width except they may be 24" in width for bathrooms or storage closets.
- A carbon monoxide detector should be installed especially if a space is being used as a bedroom.
- Plumbing and electrical protection plates and fire caulking at all holes and penetrations through the top plates should be installed during the framing phase of construction.
- Bottom plates attached directly to the concrete floor should be treated wood.
- Minimum of R-13 (R-19 if possible) insulation should be installed in framed walls on the inside of exterior walls.
- New window glazing should have a maximum of .35 U-Factor.