



MNSPECT

HELPING YOU COMPLY WITH THE CODE

235 First Street West • Waconia, MN 55387-1302

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MNSPECT MINUTE

December 2015

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Hampton Township – 6 years

INSPECTION PERSONNEL:

- Scott Qualle, Designated Building Official
- Ty Turnquist, Operations Director, Senior Commercial Plans Examiner
- Tom Richardson, Relationship Manager
- Nick Qualle, Senior Residential Plans Examiner, Field Inspector
- Tom Krause, Field Inspector
- Derek Qualle, Rental/Field Inspector
- Dean Mau, Senior Fire Plans Examiner
- Dale Engelmann, Senior Plumbing Plans Examiner, Plumbing Inspector
- Tracy Montgomery, Office Manager
- Wendy Morrissey, Administrative Assistant
- Brandy Blauert, Operations Assistant

Wishing you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

DEFINING MECHANICAL “APPLIANCES” OR “EQUIPMENT”

We have received a few questions lately on the definition of mechanical “appliances” that would require a permit. Minnesota Rules, Chapter 1300 defines “Building Service Equipment” as “the plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and elevator equipment, including piping, wiring, fixtures, and other accessories, that provides sanitation, lighting, heating, ventilation, cooling, refrigeration, firefighting, and transportation facilities essential to the occupancy of the building or structure for its designated use and occupancy.” As far as mechanical “appliances,” if it is hooked up to a gas line and/or requires venting, it needs a permit. The basic list of mechanical appliances includes: water heaters, furnaces, A/C units (not portable or window units), boilers, in-floor heat, fireplaces, unit heaters, air exchangers, bathroom/kitchen vents, and geothermal systems. Whenever you install a new gas line (or replace an existing gas line), a permit is also required.

Our initial thought process when we hear the term “appliance” is to think of a stove, dryer, microwave, etc. As a rule, these items do not need a mechanical permit UNLESS there is a gas line involved OR you are “hard-wiring” the appliance, in which case an electric permit would be required. If you’re in doubt about whether or not your new “appliance” needs a permit, call us at 952-442-7520. Just in case you are wondering, you do not need a permit for your microwave, electric stove, refrigerator, freezer, coffee maker, or food processor. ☺

HOW TO DOWN-SIZE YOUR CHRISTMAS DECORATING

It may sound drastic, but if you really are tired of the cost and time to install the big Christmas tree and hundreds of feet of exterior lights, this idea might be right for you: a brand new TINY house! It seems to be the new trend. You can’t go onto Facebook without someone “liking” the latest version of these miniscule, yet functional, homes. After you decide that you can live in a 100 to 400 square foot home (imagine how small the television will need to be) but before you go out shopping for your Christmas present to yourself, let’s look at the tiny house from the zoning and building code perspective.

The first thing you will want to do is determine where you will want your tiny house located, and then confirm with the municipal governing office if tiny houses meet their zoning ordinances. Some ordinances require that houses meet certain size requirements. Once this has been confirmed, your next step will be to determine if your tiny house will meet the MN State Building Codes. Like all other houses, tiny houses are required to comply with the 2012 International Residential Code with the 2015 MN State amendments. Here are a few of the sections that you should take into consideration while shopping for your new home.

Dwelling Unit must include: Independent living facilities incl. permanent provisions for living, sleeping, cooking, eating, and sanitation.

Minimum room size: Section R304 states that every dwelling unit shall have at least one habitable room (bathrooms are not considered habitable rooms) of at least 120 square feet. Other habitable rooms (except kitchens) must be at least 70 square feet.

Ceiling height: Section R305 states all habitable space (including hallways, bathrooms, toilet rooms, laundry rooms) must have a ceiling height of at least 7’ (habitable rooms are space in a building for living, sleeping, cooking, or eating).

Emergency escape and rescue openings: Section R310 requires that basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room must have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening (door or window) – minimum opening area must be 5.7 square feet.

Sanitation: Section R306 requires that all dwellings have a water closet, lavatory, and a tub/shower; kitchens shall have a sink; all plumbing fixtures must be connected to a sanitary sewer or approved private sewage system; and all plumbing fixtures must be connected to an approved water supply. Also, kitchen sinks, lavatories, bathtubs, showers, bidets, laundry tubs, and washing machines must have hot and cold water.

Means of egress: Section R311 requires that all dwellings have a means of egress. The egress door must have a clear width of 32” and a clear height of 78”. A floor or landing is required on each side of exterior doors. Also, hallways must have a minimum width of 36”.p

Structurally sound: All houses – even tiny ones – shall be constructed to safely support all loads, including dead loads, live loads, roof loads, flood loads, snow loads, wind loads, and seismic loads as regulated by the building code. The construction of buildings and structures in this code shall result in a structure that transfers all loads from their point of origin to the foundation.

Other requirements: In addition to the above, all houses need to meet the smoke alarm, carbon monoxide alarm, and radon requirements as well as the requirements of the Residential Energy Code, Mechanical Code, Electrical Code, and Plumbing Code.

Why are these homes not mobile homes? A manufactured home must meet HUD requirements, be 320 square feet or more, and be designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation.

For more information to help determine if a tiny house is right for you, contact the zoning official in your municipality and then visit https://www.dli.mn.gov/cclld/PDF/tiny_houses.pdf for more code-related information on this topic. In the meantime, be safe this holiday season while you are stringing your exterior lights on your not-so-tiny house!