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RIBA NEW RESIDENTIAL CODES NOW IN FORCE

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New, combined code book, IRC changes outlined in seminars by Building Commissioner Leyden
By Paul F. Eno Editor

Among the family of codes that took effect on July 1st were Rhode Island's versions of the International Residential Code (IRC) and the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). To help contractors and officials keep up with the developments, state Building Commissioner John P. Leyden presented a code update to an audience of nearly 100 people on June 29th in Warwick.

The update session, sponsored by the Rhode Island Builders Association and held at the Radisson Airport Hotel on Post Road, took participants through the latest edition of the two-inch-thick state building code book (The 2009 State of Rhode Island One and Two Family Dwelling Code), which for the first time combines the state amendments (formerly known as the Blue Pages) with the rest of the code in a single volume.

"This book is all that most builders will need. It covers everything except the electrical code," Mr. Leyden stated.

While the 2009 codes kicked in on July 1st, contractors have 90 days to learn about the new code and ease into it, Mr. Leyden stressed. Contractors can use either the old or new codes until October 1st, when the 2009 version will become mandatory, he said.

Primary code changes have to do with the IECC, he pointed out. These include a requirement for R-20 insulation for exterior dwelling-unit walls.

"While this seems like a drastic change, and many builders are afraid they will have to use 2x6 framing, there are insulation products available that will allow you to comply with the code and still use 2x4 framing," said Mr. Leyden.

Many eyebrows in the audience were raised when the building commissioner pointed out another IECC change: No more open fireplaces are allowed because of the loss of energy involved. Glass doors will be required.

Among the residential code changes Mr. Leyden reviewed in detail had to do with a new section on SIPS (structural insulated panels), snow loads, storey heights, live loads for decks and balconies, external wall locations, accessory buildings, hazardous locations, garage openings, means of egress, stairs and handrails, swimming pools, lighting systems, protection of wood against decay, and foundation and wall issues.

REScheck software suggested

Mr. Leyden suggested that the free REScheck software from the U.S. Dept. of Energy (DOE) can make compliance much easier. Find out more at www.energycodes.gov/rescheck/. The software is valid for use in Rhode Island, according to DOE.

In addition, Rhode Island has started reviewing options for a "Green Code" for construction. One of the documents that will be reviewed is the new International Green Construction Code, now being

developed by the International Code Council (ICC), Mr. Leyden said.

For details about the Rhode Island codes online, visit <http://sos.ri.gov/library/buildingcodes/>.

Copies of The 2009 State of Rhode Island One and Two Family Dwelling Code are available from RIBA. Cost: \$80 plus tax, shipping and handling for members, \$120 plus tax, shipping and handling for non-members. Call Elizabeth Carpenter at (401) 438-7400 or visit the association's headquarters at 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy., East Providence, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

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