



Clackamas
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COUNTIES

A BCD field office, the Tri-County Service Center administers the minor label program and coordinates forms, processes, and application of code for building programs in Clackamas, Multnomah, & Washington counties.

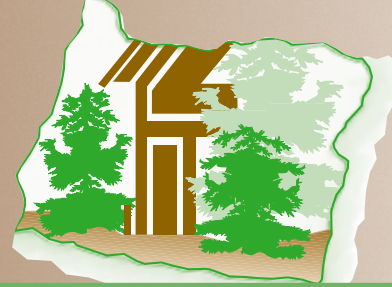
Tri-County Service Center

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News Site



A quarterly newsletter for home builders and contractors

Sept./Oct./Nov. 2001

Building code forum Oct. 4

The Tri-County Building Industry Service Board has initiated a series of code forums to facilitate the consistent application of code in the tri-county region. The first one- and two-family structural code forum, open to all builders, remodelers, contractors, building officials and inspection staffs is scheduled Thursday, October 4, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 290 Meeting Hall, 20210 SW Teton Avenue in Tualatin.

The purpose of the code forums is to discover and to discuss inconsistent code applications in the region, and to come to consensus about consistent installation and inspection standards. For example, a contractor may find that a certain installation is perfectly acceptable in several jurisdictions, but that adjustments need to be made to it for inspectors in other jurisdictions. The code panel is interested in discussing such cases. The forums will be held quarterly at the same location, usually on Thursdays. During the next 12 months, forums are scheduled for January 3, April 4, and July 11.

A panel of industry and building department code experts will lead the discussion. The panel is

interested in hearing about inconsistent practices and invites all participants to fax questions or observations to the Tri-County Service Center, (503) 872-6735, before the meeting. Please contact Marion Peterson at the Center, (503) 872-6731, if you plan to attend.

Members include:

- David Davies, City of West Linn, building official
- Lee Hiltenbrand, Portland, senior inspector
- Ken Don, Gresham, senior inspector
- Charlotte Phillips, Washington Cnty, plans examiner
- Roger Fast, Clackamas Cnty, plans examiner
- Peter Harrison, Alan Mascord Design, home designer
- Mike Goodrich, Legend Homes, home builder
- Lee Zajic, NW Renovations and Design Co., remodeler
- Mike Ewert, Building Codes Division, state code chief rep (non-voting member)

Architect and engineer positions open on the panel. Interested parties may call Joan Stevens-Schwenger, Tri-County Service Center Manager, (503) 872-6731 to apply. ♦

Settling site-specific disputes

Have you ever failed an inspection and shrugged off disputing the findings because the appeals process is too complicated and lengthy?

Thanks to the Tri-County Building Industry Service Board, tri-county contractors now have a new method of settling site-specific disputes. Tri-County's dispute resolution process allows the contractor to dispute inspection findings to the building official. If the contractor and building official can not come to an agreement, the contractor can ask for a "second opinion." Then the

building official, through the Tri-County Service Center, arranges a conference call with the contractor and on-call code experts from other jurisdictions and industry. The on-call group discusses the case, and the building official takes the group's second opinion into consideration when rendering a decision in writing for the contractor. Contractors who are not satisfied with the findings of the on-call group can appeal the decision to a local appeals board or directly to the state code chief through the "587" appeals process. ♦

Questions and Answers

The following answers were researched and prepared by Mike Ewert, one- and two family, and mechanical code specialist, Oregon Building Codes Division.

Q I put in a bedroom egress window that met the 22-inch x 20-inch requirements in the code. Why did the inspector turn it down?

A There are three requirements that a window egress must meet: Depending on whether it is a

grade floor window or not, the openable area of the window must be 5 either square feet or 5.7 square feet in area. Second, the clear opening height of the window must be a minimum of 22 inches. Third, the minimum width of the opening must be 20 inches. For example, if you installed a grade floor, double-hung window, with a clear opening height of the minimum 22 inches, the clear width area

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Tri-County building officials now require contractors on all commercial and residential projects to provide a weatherproof container on site to hold plans, inspection reports & other documents. ♦

would be approximately 32 inches wide. (Formula: $22" \times 32.75" = 720.5 \text{ sq.in.}$, $720 \text{ sq.in.} / 144 \text{ sq.in.} = 5.0 \text{ sq.ft.}$ [$144 \text{ sq.in.} = 1 \text{ sq.ft.}$])

Q Do you have a definition of a bedroom in the Dwelling Code? I'm building a house that has a room dedicated for exercise. The inspector calls it a bedroom and required me to install smoke alarms and an egress window. I think the inspector is wrong. Doesn't a bedroom have to have a closet? This room doesn't, and it has special wiring for exercise equipment, which should make it obvious we plan on using it for an exercise room.

A The Dwelling Code does not define bedroom. The dictionary definition is "a room furnished with a bed and intended primarily for sleeping."

It is not uncommon for someone to submit plans with an extra room designated as a den, office, weight room, library, etc. The primary use of these rooms is not sleeping. However, some contractors and/or home owners may designate a room as a den or office to circumvent the local SDCs (system development charges) or septic-tank requirements. The next owner may need the "den" for a bedroom. Because the cost of smoke detection and appropriate egress is small compared to the cost of a human life, it may be advantageous for the local jurisdiction to require these safety provisions, but the homeowner/contractor should be given the benefit of the doubt for the purpose of the SDCs. It is inappropriate for jurisdictions to tell homeowners/contractors how each room will be used or classified. It may be obvious on the plans that the room in question is not intended to be a bedroom. These rooms need to be treated as designated on the plans. If this particular room had a closet and is only called a den on the plans, then the requirements for smoke detectors and egress windows would be appropriate.

440-2737 (9/01/COM)

Q If I want to install fire sprinklers in my home, what code do I use?

A The appropriate standard is the 1999 NFPA 13D, "Installation of Sprinkler Systems in One- and Two-Family Dwellings and Manufactured Homes."

Q Is a built-in toilet paper dispenser required in a residential bathroom? What about an accessible toilet room?

A No to both questions for a normal single-family dwelling, but a federally funded home may have specific accessibility requirements above and beyond the code requirements.

Q Is it permissible to exit from a storeroom through a garage? What if the storeroom is converted to a bedroom later?

A Yes, it is permissible to exit a storeroom through a garage. However if the storeroom is later converted into a bedroom, the exit must be changed

Q Is a garage required to have a pedestrian door?

A No. The exception is in the manufactured dwelling code, which requires two exit doors to the exterior. Many times a garage is attached to the manufactured home which will have one of the required exit doors exiting into the garage. When this happens, an additional "pedestrian door" is required from the garage to the exterior.

Q I recently installed a front door deadbolt that requires the use of a key from both sides. The inspector turned it down, saying a deadbolt can't be used that requires the use of a key on the inside of the required exit door. Does this apply only to the required exit door or all doors exiting in the house?

A Code requires that all egress doors shall be readily openable from the side from which egress is to be made, without the use of a key, special knowledge, or tool. ♦

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