

# WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

## RESIDENTIAL BASEMENT ALTERATIONS



**THIS IS A GUIDE ONLY !**

**FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, CONTACT THE BUILDING INSPECTOR OR  
TOWNSHIP AS ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS MAY PERTAIN TO YOUR  
PROJECT.**

**WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP  
BUREAU OF PLANNING, ZONING & DEVELOPMENT  
BASEMENT ALTERATIONS GUIDE**

Whitehall Township has assembled the information contained in this "Code Guide" to assist homeowners when planning to do basement alterations at their property. It contains general information regarding materials and types of construction permitted by Township Ordinances.

**While we hope that this information is most helpful to you, please remember that this is a guide only, and if you have additional questions beyond the information contained herein, you should contact the Building Inspector at Keycodes Inspection Agency at 610-866-9663 or the Township Zoning Officer at 610-437-5524 Ext. 1155.**

Please also know that the Township's hours are Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All permit applications must be considered complete before review (this means all plans and specifications must be included with the application and the contractor's workmen's compensation coverage information submitted). On your application, please provide a valid email address for correspondence.

**Please know that non-refundable application fees are due at time of submission. The fee for RESIDENTIAL is \$ 55.00 for each permit application being submitted. Additional fees may be due at permit issuance.**

**NO PERMIT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THE APPLICATION FEE.**

# RESIDENTIAL BASEMENT FINISHING CODE SPECIFICATIONS

## **PERMITS:**

A building permit application must be submitted by the individual doing the work and must also include detailed construction plans; and if involving a contractor and pursuant to PA Worker's Compensation Laws, the appropriate insurance coverage information must be provided to the Township. If any information is missing, the application will not be accepted. Please know that no work may be started until the appropriate permits have been secured from the Bureau of Planning, Zoning & Development.

**REMINDER:** separate permits are required for building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical work.

## **PLAN:**

Only a basic plan need be submitted. The plan should show the type of room (bedroom, family room, etc.) to be finished, including the location of lights, outlets, the dimension of each room, and the location of doors and windows.

**Please read through all of the following items carefully. The following items are minimum code requirements that you will need to be aware of for proper compliance. This list is not all inclusive and other code requirements may apply. Contractor and/or property owner are responsible for compliance with all minimum codes and Township ordinances. (Adopted Codes are: 2015 IRC, IPC, IMC & 2014 NEC)**

## **MINIMUM ROOM SPACES AND SIZES:**

- Bedrooms: min. 70 sq. ft. with a min. 7' dimension.
- Ceiling Height: 7' 0" min. (R305.1) (7' for projections, furred ceilings, hallways and at light fixtures).
- Water Closet: 21" clear space in front and 15" to each side from center of closet bowl.
- Showers: 900 sq. inch shower floor area, 30" least min. dimension, temp. glass, door shall swing out.
- Hallways: 36" min. finished width.

## **STAIRWAY MINIMUMS:**

- 36" min. finished width.
- 6' 8" min. finished headroom (measured from tread nosing straight up to ceiling or fixture).
- Minimum tread length measured from nose to nose is 9".
- Maximum riser height is 8.25".
- Maximum variation allowed on rise and run shall not exceed 3/8".
- Handrails shall be installed on at least one side of stairs with more than three risers. Height of railing shall be 34" - 38" measured from the nose of the treads.
- Guardrails required shall be 36" min. height with spindle design set such that a 4" sphere cannot pass through at any point along the rail. Elevations more than 30" in height require a guardrail.
- Enclosed, usable space under stairways are to be 1/2" sheetrock for the full inside walls and ceiling of the enclosed usable space. (R302.7)

## **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

- All sole plates resting on concrete slabs must be redwood or pressure treated; unless an approved vapor barrier can be verified.
- All beams to be properly sized and supported for loads carried.
- Insulation shall be at least R-19 batts or R-15 continuous (R-13 if using PA Alternative) with vapor retarder installed on warm side of exterior walls.
- Maximum stud spacing is 24" o.c. for non-bearing walls.

## **WINDOW REQUIREMENTS:**

- Size of windows must be 8% of room area for natural light unless specifically approved otherwise.
- Each bedroom window must have a min. net opening of 5.7 sq. ft. (or 5.0 sq.ft. for grade floor or below grade openings) with 24" min. height and 20" min. width. The sill height shall not be more than 44" off the floor. Bedroom window wells must extend a minimum of 36" out from the building.
- Tempered glass required when window is within 18" of floor level or within 24" of door. Please see Section R308.4.3 for details.

## **PLUMBING:**

- All fixtures must be plumbed to meet the current PA UCC/2015 IRC and International Plumbing Code.
- No lead or acid bearing solutions are allowed.
- Washing machine P-trap must be a min. of 6" above the floor.
- Tubs, showers, sinks and lavatories must have P-traps.

## **GAS FURNACES AND WATER HEATERS:**

- Furnaces or water heaters **shall not be** located in bedrooms or bathrooms.
- Access to furnace and water heater shall not be through bedrooms or bathrooms.
- The furnace or water heater must be removable without moving the other.
- The furnace must have 30" of clearing working space in front, 6" to combustibles from the front and as per attached specifications plate for side and back clearances to combustibles.
- Mechanical equipment must be provided with outside combustion air. Size all ducting per current International Mechanical Code.
- Carbon Monoxide Detector shall be outside of sleeping areas.

## **WOODSTOVE AND FIREPLACES:**

- Must be installed with clearances to combustibles as specified in their listing requirements. All wood stoves and fireplaces must be listed and labeled units. Consult with building inspector for special circumstances or requirements.

## **ELECTRICAL:**

- Receptacle outlets must be provided so that any point along a wall is not over 12' in distance measured from one outlet to another.
- Label all circuits in panel box.

## **ELECTRICAL (Continued):**

- Arc Fault breakers are required for most outlets including lighting and receptacle outlets.
- A switch controlled lighting outlet must be provided at hallways, stairways, exits and in each room.
- Provide a smoke detector for each bedroom, guest room, in access area to all bedrooms, and at least one smoke detector on each floor. Detectors shall be placed in existing bedrooms when any work is being done that requires a permit for remodel. Smoke detectors shall be hard wired with battery backup. **Exception:** if finish wall or ceiling materials would have to be removed to install wiring for smoke detectors, a battery detector will be allowed.
- Provide GFCI outlet on kitchen countertops 12” or wider. There must be at least two dedicated counter-top outlets (min.).

## **FRAMING:**

- All wood sill plates that are placed on concrete slabs must be pressure treated or redwood unless and approved vapor barrier can be verified.
- Provide fire stopping as required by the 2015 IRC (Note: detail sheet included on last page).
- Non-bearing stud walls shall not exceed 24” o.c.
- Sheetrock backing required at ceiling corners and wall corners as required.
- Holes shall not be drilled in the top or bottom 2” of floor joists.
- Do not notch floor joists.
- Holes drilled in studs closer than 1 1/4” to the edge for piping or wiring must have nail guards installed. Holes shall not exceed 40% of stud for bearing walls. Holes shall not exceed 60% of stud for non-bearing walls.

## **INSULATION:**

- Approved R-19 batts or R-15 continuous (R-13 if using PA Alternative) insulation shall be properly installed in all exterior walls.
- Kraft faced insulation or poly vapor retarder required on warm side of above grade exterior walls.
- Insulation should be neatly fit into place with minimum amount of compression.

## **SHEETROCK:**

- All sheetrock joints shall be properly backed.
- Sheetrock installed in tub and shower compartments shall be water-resistant type. Do not use a vapor barrier in these locations.
- Enclosed, accessible space under stairways shall be type 1/2” sheetrock.
- Sheetrock shall be properly attached to the studs. Screws shall be placed not to exceed max. spacing in table (R702.3.5) and should penetrate the stud 5/8” min.

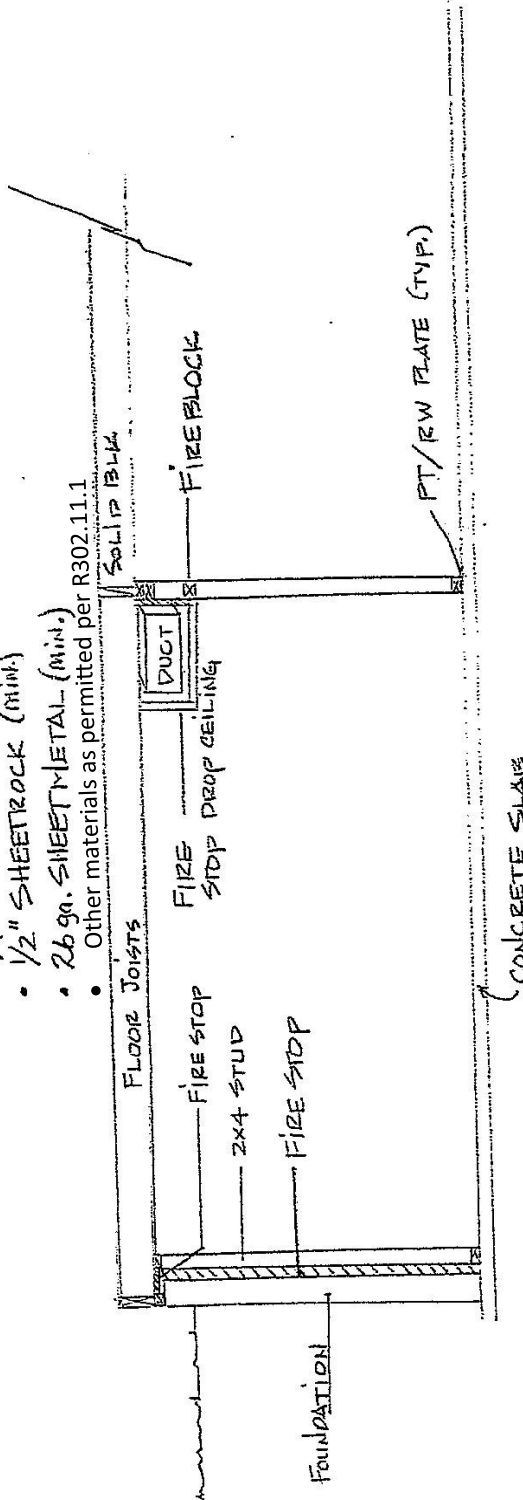
## **INSPECTIONS:**

All inspections are scheduled with Keycodes Inspection Agency at 610-866-9663. Please know there is a minimum of 48 hours notice for all inspection requests. You must have the permit number, type of inspection needed and the job location address when calling to schedule an inspection. If there is a contractor performing the work, they must request the inspections. Any inspection that is not ready, no access to job site, or a failed inspection, will be charged a reinspection fee of \$57.25.

# FIRE STOP REQUIREMENTS

## FIRE STOP MATERIALS:

- 2X WOOD LUMBER (MIN.)
- 3/4" PLYWOOD (MIN.)
- 1/2" SHEETROCK (MIN.)
- 26 ga. SHEET METAL (MIN.)
- Other materials as permitted per R302.11.1



## NOTICE:

FIRE STOPS SHALL BE INSTALLED WHERE EXTERIOR-FRAMED WALLS HAVE SLIGHT SPACE FROM FIN. WALL. THIS FIRE STOP SHALL BE INSTALLED VERTICALLY THE FULL HEIGHT OF THE STUD WALL EVERY 10' MAX. HORIZ. DISTANCE. ALSO, FIRE STOP THE TOP OF THIS SAME WALL SEPARATING THE HORIZ. JOIST CAVITIES FROM THE VERT. SPACE BETWEEN THE STUDS.