

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENT FORM FOR PROPOSED CODE CHANGES

(This form must be submitted electronically)

### IRC-141, R311.7.2

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### **Proposed Code Change - Language**

IRC Section R311.7.2 is amended to read as follows:

#### **R311.7 Stairways**

**R311.7.1 Width** (this section remains unchanged)

#### **R311.7.2 Headroom.**

The minimum headroom in all parts of the stairway shall not be less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm) measured vertically from the sloped line adjoining the tread nosing or from the floor surface of the landing or platform on that portion of the stairway.

#### **Exceptions:**

1. Where the nosings of treads at the side of a flight extend under the edge of a floor opening through which the stair passes, the floor opening shall be allowed to project horizontally into the required headroom a maximum of 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches (121 mm).
2. The minimum headroom of a stairway leading to a basement alteration shall not be less than 6 feet 4 inches (1931 mm).

### **Proposed Code Change – Need and Reason**

The Chapter 1309 - 2012 IRC Advisory Committee already approved IRC-84, MR 1309.0305 (REV 1-25-2012). This code change is needed and reasonable to provide a cost-effective way to convert unfinished existing basements into finished basements and allow code officials to require smoke alarms and egress windows in these spaces.

There are a significant number of homes in Minnesota that have unfinished basements that may contain a mechanical room, laundry room and storage space. Homeowners often want to finish their basement and turn it into more habitable space. This is usually one of the most cost effective

ways for a homeowner to add a bathroom, bedroom, playroom or den. Code officials are put in a very difficult situation if the existing stairway of the remodeled basement does not meet the minimum headroom height of 6 feet 8 inches required by R311.7.2. Many remodeled basements will not meet the minimum requirements of this code section. Without this amendment homeowners will likely have to replace an entire stairway, landing and back door access at a very high cost.

This issue is incredibly important when it comes to whether or not a building code official can legally enforce the requirements of battery operated smoke alarms in each bedroom and 10 feet from any bedroom and egress windows in sleeping rooms (bedrooms) as they can for almost any interior work that requires a permit in a dwelling (per sections R314.3.1, R314.3.2 and R314.3.3 for smoke detection and notification). If a 6' 8" stairway headroom is not achieved the building code official cannot issue a certificate of occupancy for the remodeled basement until the homeowner spends thousands of dollars installing a new stairway.

This code proposal is very needed and reasonable because it aligns the realities of Minnesota's older housing stock with the necessity for essential life safety features. Homeowners will try to get as much headroom in their stairway as possible during their basement remodel. This code proposal merges market realities with life and safety minimums.

This code proposal is also reasonable because it only affects existing housing and not new construction.

### **Proposed Code Change – Cost/Benefit Analysis**

This code change will decrease the cost of construction for homeowners with existing basements that have a minimum stairway headroom of less than 6 feet 8 inches.

## Other Factors to Consider Related to Proposed Code Change

1. Is this proposed code change meant to:

change language contained in a published code book? If so, list section(s).  
2012 International Residential Code, Section R311.7.2

change language contained in an existing amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, list Rule part(s).

delete language contained in a published code book? If so, list section(s).

delete language contained in an existing amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, list Rule part(s).

neither; this language will be new language, not found in the code book or in Minnesota Rule.

2. Is this proposed code change required by a Minnesota Statute or new legislation? If so, please provide the citation to the Statute or legislation.

No

3. Will this proposed code change impact other sections of a published code book or of an amendment in Minnesota Rule? If so, please list the affected sections or rule parts.

Yes, this code change will allow IRC-84, MR 1309.0305 (REV 1-25-2012) to be enforced for existing basements and existing basement stairways.

4. Will this proposed code change impact other parts of the Minnesota State Building Code? If so, please list the affected parts of the Minnesota State Building Code.

No

5. Who are the parties affected or segments of industry affected by this proposed code change?

Homeowners, building code officials, remodelers, fire code officials.

6. Can you think of other means or methods to achieve the purpose of the proposed code change? If so, please explain what they are and why your proposed change is the preferred method or means to achieve the desired result.

No

7. Are you aware of any federal requirement or regulation related to this proposed code change? If so, please list the regulation or requirement.

No