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Community Development Department**

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Building Division

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CODE APPLICATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS:

DATE: February 9, 2018

SUBJECT: Utility/storage spaces and rooms in residential construction

CODE CYCLE: 2019 California Building Codes Standards

APPLICABLE CODES: 2019 California Building Code; 2016 California Residential Code; 2016 California Electrical Code

Section 104.1 of the 2019 California Building Code (CBC) states, in part: “The building official shall have the authority to render interpretations of this code and to adopt policies and procedures in order to clarify the application of its provisions.”

Chapter 3 of the 2019 California Residential Code (CRC) has numerous sections within that chapter that address minimum standards for one and two family dwellings with regard to certain non-structural provisions. Such standards apply to habitable and living spaces, and include, but are not limited to, emergency escape and rescue openings, light, ventilation, heating, and means of egress. By definition, habitable and living spaces do not include utility and storage spaces.

Section 210.52 of the 2019 California Electrical Code (CEC) provides specific standards for the placement and location of dwelling unit receptacle outlets in habitable and living spaces. Such receptacles are required to be “installed such that no point measured along the floor line or any wall space is more than six (6) feet from a receptacle outlet.”

DISCUSSION

Although the referenced codes above address certain standards for residential dwelling unit habitable and living spaces in detail, the requirements for utility/storage spaces other than private garages in dwelling units is largely unaddressed. It has been observed by Building Division staff on multiple occasions that storage/utility spaces within dwelling units have been used for habitable and living purposes, and even for overnight sleeping purposes. Such spaces that are used in this manner represent a clear and distinct hazard to the occupants of such spaces, as certain fire-life safety features are typically not in place, such as adequate means of egress, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and emergency escape and rescue openings.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR UTILITY AND STORAGE SPACES IN RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

In order for any space or room in residential construction to be considered storage/utility space (as opposed to habitable or living space), the following criteria will need to be met:

- 1) There shall be no more than one (1) light for every 70 square feet of usable floor space controlled by no more than one (1) lighting control.
- 2) There shall be a minimum of seven (7) feet of ceiling height as measured above the finish floor.
- 3) There shall be no more than one (1) electric plug receptacle in the room or space. The receptacle may have no more than four (4) individual plugs.

This criteria will need to appear on plans submitted for a building permit, and the space or room will need to be identified as storage or utility. For all other rooms and spaces that do not comply with the above criteria, those rooms and spaces shall not be considered as storage or utility. Building Division staff may be contacted at the contact information provided at the top of this document or at: (760) 924-1803, or tperry@mono.ca.gov.