



Department of Permitting Services

Division of Building Construction

255 Rockville Pike, 2nd Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850

CODE INTERPRETATION/POLICY

Policy Name:

Basement Ceiling Height

Code/Year	Section of Code	Title of Code Section/Subsection
International Residential Code 2009 (IRC 2009)	R305.1	Minimum height
Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code (MBRC) 2009	Section 701.3	Compliance

Statement/Background of Issue

The advent of the MBRC 2001 in October 2001 brought into question the requirement for minimum ceiling heights in finished basements of one- and two- family dwellings. The department decided to allow basement rooms in one and two family dwellings built before October 2000 to have finished ceiling heights of minimum 6'-8" with minimum 6'-4" to beams, girders, ducts and similar obstructions spaced not less than 4' on center.

On April 15, 2002, the Montgomery County Executive Regulation 36-01 adopted IRC 2000. Section R305.1 of IRC and exception #1 require, for newly constructed dwellings, minimum 7' ceiling heights in *finished* basements with minimum 6'-6" to beams and girders spaced not less than 4' on center. The requirements for existing buildings remained the same as in MBRC 2001.

As of July 1, 2005, newly constructed dwellings were required to have minimum 7' basement ceiling heights with minimum 6'-6" to beams and girders spaced not more than 4' on center whether the basement is finished or unfinished as required by Section 305.1 of the IRC 2003 and Montgomery County Executive Regulation 24-04, Section 9 that deleted exception #2 to this Section 305.1 of the IRC. The requirements for existing buildings remained the same as in MBRC 2001.

As of July 14, 2008, newly constructed dwellings were required to have minimum 7' basement ceiling heights with minimum 6'-6" to beams and girders spaced not less than 4' on center whether the basement is finished or unfinished as required by Section R305.1 of the IRC 2006 and Montgomery County Executive Regulation 28-07, Section 76 that deleted exception #2 to Section R305.1. In existing buildings (defined as buildings having the approved final inspection at least 1 year before a building permit application for that building was made), newly created habitable and occupiable spaces and corridors, including finished or unfinished basements, must have 7' ceiling heights according to Section 701.3 of the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) 2006 which was adopted as the MBRC 2006.

As of July 19, 2010, newly constructed dwellings are required to have minimum 7' basement ceiling heights by Montgomery County Executive Regulation 26-09, Section 121 that deletes Section R305.1.1 of the IRC 2009. In existing buildings newly created habitable and occupiable spaces and corridors, including finished or unfinished basements, must have 7' ceiling heights according to Section 701.3 of the IEBC 2009 which was adopted as the MBRC 2009 on July 1, 2010.

Division Interpretation

To eliminate the conflict between the provisions of an earlier editions of the building code in effect at the time the permit for building a single family dwelling or addition was issued and the requirements of the MBRC 2009, this department interprets minimum basement ceiling heights as follows:

(1) If the permit for building a single family dwelling or addition was issued before October 2000, all one and two family dwellings shall have finished basements with minimum ceiling heights of 6'-8" and not less then 6'4" to the finished bottom surface at beams, columns, ducts and similar obstructions that are a minimum 4' on center;

(2) If the permit for building a single family dwelling or addition was issued after October 2000, all one and two family dwellings shall have finished or unfinished basement rooms with minimum ceiling heights of 7' with minimum 6'-6" to beams and girders spaced not more then 4' on center.

Interpretation/Policy No.	Date	Division Chief
BCP11-02	March 1, 2011	Hadi Mansouri 