

How to Adopt a Code Addressing Radon-Resistant New Construction

Yorkville, Illinois

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Summary: If adopted, the statewide Residential Building Code in Illinois requires the installation of passive radon mitigation systems in new homes. Individual towns and cities in the state, however, can choose to either adopt the code or not, depending on their evaluation of radon risk their communities. In 2000, the city of Yorkville adopted the code and all of its appendices, including the section on radon-resistant new construction (RRNC). Since then, Yorkville has adopted updated versions of the International Residential Code (IRC), including Appendix F covering radon reduction measures.

Code Adoption Process: A representative of the city's Building Department presented the idea of adopting the code to the city council, and it was added to the council's docket for discussion. Then the department began outreach to the builder community. This is the standard process Yorkville officials follow each time the International Code Council (ICC) updates the IRC.

Educating Key Stakeholders: As part of its outreach, the Yorkville Building Department hosted seminars for local builders. City council representatives were invited as well. Officials from ICC came to Yorkville to explain the basic code and revisions. During this free, 2-day meeting, code officials reviewed the entire IRC, including the radon section.

Reasons for Success: The Yorkville Building Department maintains an open door policy for builders to come in and ask questions about building codes and radon. Because sections of the code may be open to interpretation, this open door policy gives department staff the opportunity to explain the local situation, their analyses, and the reasoning behind the proposed code adoption. This access allows builders to pose questions, air grievances, and be involved in the adoption process. Gary Williams, Assistant Code Official in the Yorkville Building Department, noted that builder education and outreach were extremely influential in the code adoption process in Yorkville, which took about 6 months from start to finish.

Yorkville officials are currently studying the 2006 IRC. Williams knows it is in the best interest of the homeowner to have a completely safe house. "We feel the ICC created the code for life safety," said Williams. "If you want to build in our community, you need to include these life safety measures. There's not much resistance when you're talking about life safety."