



2021 Significant Code Changes for the IRC

This summary includes changes to the International Residential Code (IRC), including the Chapter 11 Energy Efficiency provisions extracted from the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) Residential Provisions. This is not all the changes that were approved.

IRC Section R301.2.1.2 Protection of openings : Wind-borne debris protection in hurricane-prone regions is now required for any site within one mile of the mean high-water line of an Exposure D condition instead of just one mile from a coastal mean high-water line. This will include buildings adjacent to wide rivers or large inland lakes but not directly fronting on the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico.

IRC Section 301.2.2.6 Cripple Wall Clear Height: H



IRC Tables 403.1(1), 403.1(2), 403.1(3) Minimum Thickness for Concrete Footings for Light -Frame Construction: The minimum footing width tables are revised to remove overly conservative assumptions or correct underlying calculations to match common engineering practice for light-frame construction. In most cases footing sizes will be modestly reduced from the 2015 and 2018 IRC requirements.

IRC Sections 403.1.6 Foundation Anchorage: Requirements are added for wet-setting of anchor bolts in foundations, including the need for proper consolidation of concrete around wet-set bolts.

IRC Section 703.4 Flashing at Window and Door Openings : An insulation stop is required be installed around window and door openings to allow for drainage of water to the surface of the exterior wall finish. The insulation stop is to be located 1 to 2 inches from the face of exterior sheathing.

IRC Sections 703.7 Lath and Furring: The lath and attachment requirements for exterior lath and plaster (stucco) are revised to correlate with ASTM C926 and C1063 and attachment and placement requirements for furring. Fasteners for lath are required to be spaced 7 inches vertically along studs or furring and horizontally at the spacing of the studs or furring.

IRC Sections 703.7.3 Water Resistive Barriers: The water-resistive barrier requirements behind stucco where applied to wood-based sheathing are divided into separate sections for dry and moist climate zones. A 3/16-inch air space or material with high drainage efficiency is required in moist climate zones.

IRC Tables N1102.1.2 and N1102.1.4 Insulation and Fenestration Requirements: Prescriptive wall, ceiling and slab edge insulation levels are increased as follows:

- x Wall insulation in Climate Zones 4 and 5 increased from R-20 in the cavity to R-20 in the cavity +R-5 continuous.
- x Slab edges in Climate Zone 3 are required to be insulated with a minimum R-10 at 2-foot depth.
- x The depth of the required R-10 slab edge insulation for Climate Zone 4 and 5 is increased from 2 feet to 4 feet minimum.
- x Attic insulation levels are increased in Climate Zones 2 and 3 from R-38 to R-49, and in Climate Zones 4-8 from R-49 to R-60.

IRC Sections N1104.1 -N1104.2 Lighting Controls: 100% of permanently installed lighting fixtures must have high efficacy lamps with efficiency of as 70 lumens per watt. All permanently installed lighting fixtures must have dimmers or occupant sensor controls. IRC Section N1105.2 Performance -Based Compliance: A backstop is added in the performance path requiring the building thermal envelope to achieve equal or greater levels of energy efficiency to the 2009 IECC.

