

ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENT FORM
FOR PROPOSED CODE CHANGES
(This form must be submitted electronically)

IRC-93, R311.6

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Proposed Code Change - Language

R311.6 Hallways. The minimum width of a hallway shall be not less than ~~3 feet (914 mm)~~ 27 inches (698 mm).

Proposed Code Change – Need and Reason

The width of a hallway is an arbitrary dimension not based on safety but likely based on convenience.

The International Residential Code Commentary states the following in regards to hallways:

R311.3 Hallways. The minimum width of a hallway shall be not less than 3 feet (914 mm).

❖ Hallways must be a minimum of 3 feet (914 mm) wide to accommodate moving furniture into rooms off the hallway and for safe egress from the structure.

If the width were really necessary to provide for safe egress from the structure, wouldn't it also regulate the size of openings into the hallway? The code does not. There is nothing to prevent someone from providing an opening into a room of 24 inches or 18 inches wide. And, the scoping provisions of the code state that the code is to provide minimum requirements to protect life, health, and safety. It doesn't say anything about moving furniture! And, 36 inches is no guarantee that all furniture can be moved through it. There are many couches and chairs that will not fit through a 36 inch hallway, let alone a smaller doorway.

Then, if a hallway needed to be 36 inches wide for moving furniture and safe egress, why wouldn't the same logic apply to a stairway. The basic stair width requirement is 36 inches. But that can be reduced by 4.5 inches on each side for handrails. And the code only requires that the width of stairways below the handrails be 27 inches. Spiral stairways are permitted to be 26 inches.

This proposal reduces the required hallway width to 27 inches consistent with stairs. It is necessary to reduce the required width of stairs for two reasons. Hallways are often framed at 36 inches without consideration for wall finishes. This may not get caught until a final inspection. There is nothing to be gained by having a home significantly altered to achieve one additional inch of width. The market place will drive the hallway width for new construction.

The other reason why the width should be reduced is to provide relief to homeowners of existing homes when basements are finished. There is often very little thought or planning put into the design of an **unfinished** basement. As a result, it is often difficult to achieve a 36 inch wide hallway in these existing spaces. Furnaces, in particular, are usually centrally located and conflict with the location of a hallway. Often times the only way to achieve a 36 inch wide hallway is either to relocate a bearing wall or to relocate the furnace including ductwork, gas piping, vents, and electrical connections. This is expensive.

This proposal is necessary because it reduces the hallway width to the same minimum required for stairs. There should be no safety issue as long as the widths are the same. It is necessary to reduce the width to enable homeowners the opportunity to finish basements without exposing them to the significant expense involved with moving service equipment and bearing walls. This proposal will also create greater uniformity of enforcement because it enables all building departments the ability to enforce a truly meaningful requirement. As it is now, some departments enforce the rule and others don't.

R311.7 Stairways.

R311.7.1 Width. Stairways shall not be less than 36 inches (914 mm) in clear width at all points above the permitted handrail height and below the required headroom height. Handrails shall not project more than 4.5 inches (114 mm) on either side of the stairway and the minimum clear width of the stairway at and below the handrail height, including treads and landings, shall not be less than 31½ inches (787 mm) where a handrail is installed on one side and 27 inches (698 mm) where handrails are provided on both sides.

Exception: The width of spiral stairways shall be in accordance with Section R311.7.9.1.

R311.7.10.1 Spiral stairways. Spiral stairways are permitted, provided the minimum clear width at and below the handrail shall be 26 inches (660 mm) with each tread having a 7½-inch (190 mm) minimum tread depth at 12 inches (914 mm) from the narrower edge. All treads shall be identical, and the rise shall be no more than 9½ inches (241 mm). A minimum headroom of 6 feet 6 inches (1982 mm) shall be provided.

Proposed Code Change – Cost/Benefit Analysis

This proposal will reduce the cost of construction.

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 IRC sec. R311.6 Hallways.

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.

No

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?

Code officials, building designers, contractors, building owners

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