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**Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth
Bureau of Construction Codes
P.O. Box 30254
Lansing, Michigan 48909
(517) 241-9302**

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2006 Michigan Residential Code Moisture Control

“Providing for Michigan’s Safety in the Built Environment”

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2006 MICHIGAN RESIDENTIAL CODE MOISTURE CONTROL

Issue

The Michigan Residential Code (MRC) Section R318.1 requires the installation of moisture vapor retarders in residential occupancies, which reads as follows.

R318.1 Moisture control. In all framed walls, floors and roof/ceilings comprising elements of the building thermal envelope, a vapor retarder shall be installed on the warm-in-winter side of the insulation.

Exceptions:

1. In construction where moisture or freezing will not damage the materials.
2. Where the framed cavity or space is ventilated to allow moisture to escape.
3. In counties identified as in climate zones 1 through 4 in Table N1101.2

Table N1101.2 in the Michigan Uniform Energy Code (MUEC) identifies climate zones 1 through 3. Therefore, it would appear that exception 3 allows the exclusion of the vapor retarder in all residential construction in Michigan, which is not the intent of the MUEC.

Discussion

In the 2006 International Residential Code (IRC), climate zones 1 through 4 were those from the gulf coast to southern Illinois, Indiana and Ohio and the climate zones for Michigan were 5, 6 and 7. When the 2003 MUEC was developed the climate zones for Michigan retained the designations of 1, 2 and 3, that had been used prior editions. The language of exception 3 of R318.1 refers to climate zones as numbered within the International Residential Code, which are the warm humid climates.

It was never the intent of the IRC to not require the vapor retarder in residential construction for Michigan. Exception 3 of R318.1 was an oversight during the review process and should have been deleted from the MRC.

Conclusion

When enforcing the 2006 Michigan Residential Code Section R318.1, it shall be read with exception 3 deleted as follows:

R318.1 Moisture control. In all framed walls, floors and roof/ceilings comprising elements of the building thermal envelope, a vapor retarder shall be installed on the warm-in-winter side of the insulation.

Exceptions:

1. In construction where moisture or freezing will not damage the materials.
2. Where the framed cavity or space is ventilated to allow moisture to escape.

As indicated above, it is the intent of the code to require a vapor retarder in the Michigan climate zones.

Questions regarding this technical bulletin may be directed to the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth, Bureau of Construction Codes, Building Division, P.O. Box 30254, Lansing, MI 48909 or by calling (517) 241-9317.