THE CITY OF Fargo FAR MORE

Fargo Inspections

City of Fargo
225 Fourth Street North
701-241-1561
Fax: 701-476-6779

MEMORANDUM

TO: Building Industry Association Members

FROM: Inspections Department

DATE: January 27, 2026

SUBJECT: Significant Changes to Code

This memorandum is to remind residential contractors of significant changes to the City's adopted codes, which have taken effect on January 1, 2026. These updates apply to all applicable residential projects submitted. The following information outlines the key changes and expectations to ensure continued compliance during plan review and inspections.

Stairs – Stringers, Live Loads, Decks, and Risers

We commonly see exterior stair stringers not in compliance with the section below. ***Stair stringers must be supported at both ends.***

318.7.5.1 Risers. The riser height shall be not more than 8". The riser height shall be measured vertically between landing edges of the adjacent treads. ***The greatest riser height within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8 inch.*** Risers shall be vertical or sloped from the underside of the nosing of the treat above at an angle not more than 30 degrees from the vertical. At open risers, openings located more than 30 inches as the measured vertically, to the floor or grade below shall not permit the passage of 4-inch diameter sphere.

318.5 Landing, deck, balcony, and stair construction and attachment. Exterior landings, decks, balconies, stairs and similar facilities shall be positively anchored to the primary structure to resist both vertical and lateral forces or shall be designed to be self-supporting. Attachment shall not be accomplished by use of toenails or nail subject to withdrawal.

301.5 Live Load. The minimum uniformly distributed live load shall be as provided in Table R301.5.

Stairs are required to be 40 pounds per square foot. There is a footnote that says individual stair treads shall be capable of supporting the uniformly distributed live load or a 300-pound concentrated load applied on an area of 2 inches by 2 inches, whichever produces the greater stresses.

TABLE R301.5
MINIMUM UNIFORMLY DISTRIBUTED LIVE LOADS (in pounds per square foot)

USE	UNIFORM LOAD (psf)	CONCENTRATED LOAD (lb)
Uninhabitable attics without storage[b]	10	—
Uninhabitable attics with limited storage[b, g]	20	—
Habitable attics and attics served with fixed stairs	30	—
Balconies (exterior) and decks[e]	40	—
Fire escapes	40	—
Guards	—	200[h, i]
Guard in-fill components[f]	—	50[h]
Handrail[d]	—	200[h]
Passenger vehicle garages[a]	50[a]	2,000[h a]
Areas other than sleeping areas	40	—
Sleeping areas	30	—
Stairs	40[c]	300[c]

For SI: 1 inch = 25.4 mm, 1 pound per square foot = 0.0479 kPa, 1 square inch = 645 mm^2, 1 pound = 4.45 N.

Continuity and Fire-Walls Between Dwelling Units

302.2.3 Continuity. The fire-resistance-rated wall or assembly separating townhouse units *shall be continuous from the foundation to the underside of the roof sheathing, roof deck, or slab.* The fire-resistance rating shall extend the full length of the wall or assembly, including wall extensions through and separating attached enclosed accessory structures.

302.3.3 Continuity. Vertical and horizontal assemblies separating dwelling units shall be constructed in a manner that provides continuity of the fire-resistance rating between the dwelling units.

310 Smoke Alarms and 311 Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Final building inspections are failing due to the lack of updated *and interconnected* smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Where alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, the individual dwelling unit shall be equipped with smoke alarms and carbon monoxide located as required for new buildings. The only exceptions will be for [1] work *solely* involving the exterior surfaces of a building or [2] alterations/repairs for plumbing or mechanical systems.

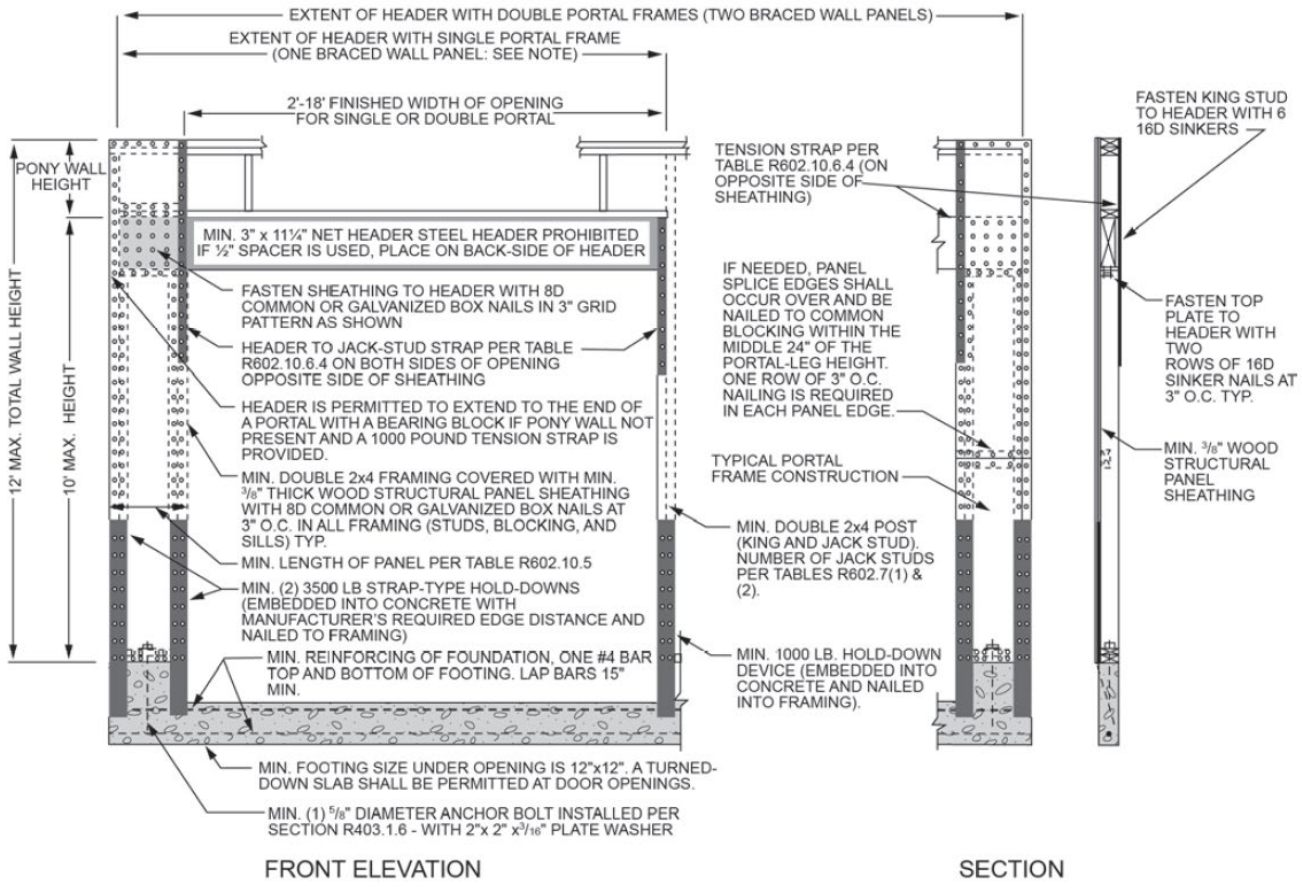
N1102.1.3 Insulation Minimum R-Values

Cass County is located in Zone 6, so basement wall insulation value is now *required to be **R15.***

Wall Panel Bracing

Portal framing *maximum* width is *18 feet.*

602.10.6.2 Method PFH: Portal frame with hold-downs. Method PFH braced wall panels shall be constructed in accordance with Figure R602.10.6.2. [See page 4]



For SI: 1 inch = 25.4 mm, 1 foot = 304.8 mm.

Note: Header shall not extend over more than one opening.

FIGURE R602.10.6.2
METHOD PFH—PORTAL FRAME WITH HOLD-DOWNS

Mechanical – Exhaust Rates

M1505.5 Local exhaust Rates. Local exhaust systems shall be designed to have the capacity to exhaust the minimum airflow rate determined in accordance with Table M1505.5 at one or more speed settings. The listed exhaust airflow rate for a bathroom or toilet room exhaust fan shall equal or exceed the exhaust airflow rate in Table M1505.5 at a minimum static pressure of 0.25-inch WC at one or more speed settings in accordance with Section M1505.3. [See page 5]

~~TABLE M1505.4.4~~ TABLE M1505.5
MINIMUM REQUIRED LOCAL EXHAUST RATES FOR ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY DWELLINGS

AREA TO BE EXHAUSTED	EXHAUST RATES~~[a]~~
Kitchens	100 cfm intermittent or 25 cfm continuous
Bathrooms-Toilet Rooms	Mechanical exhaust capacity of 50 cfm intermittent or 20 cfm continuous

For SI: 1 cubic foot per minute = 0.0004719 m^3/s, 1 inch water column = 0.2488 kPa.

Floodproof Construction Requirements

At the June 23rd, 2025 Fargo City Commission Meeting, the City Commission approved revisions to Fargo's Floodproof Construction Requirements policy. A floodproof construction guide is available on the City's website and can be found on the Inspections Department – Forms and Publications page. [direct link below]

(https://download.fargond.gov/0/floodproof_construction_requirements.pdf)

Below is a summary of the key changes:

- Eliminates all references to the 41' Water Surface Elevation Inundation Area (WSEIA) and the associated requirement for floodproof basements in these areas.
    - Floodproof basements are now only required in FEMA's Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA/100yr floodplain) or in areas removed from the SFHA by a Letter of Map Revision Based on Fill (LOMR-F). This aligns with FEMA's minimum requirement.
- Establishes the minimum building elevation for structures within the SFHA or LOMR-F areas as the Base Flood Elevation (BFE/100yr floodplain elevation) plus 2-feet by removing the 41' WSEIA requirements.

- Simplifies elevation requirements for structures outside of SFHA and LOMR-F areas to 30-inches (2.5-feet) above the adjacent City street back of curb.
    - This replaces the previous requirement of the higher of either 41' WSEIA plus 1.2-feet or BFE plus 2-feet.
- Allows both residential and non-residential, non-primary structures to have a minimum elevation of BFE plus 1-foot.
    - Previously only residential, non-primary structures qualified for this elevation. This change aligns with the State of North Dakota's minimum requirement.

Please feel free to reach out to our office with any questions. Thank you.