

CODE

INTERPRETATION



# MECKLENBURG COUNTY Building Code Enforcement

CODE: 2002 NC Residential Code

SUBJECT: Pull down attic stairs in garages

Reviewed by: Gene Morton/George Rogers/Jeff Griffin

Question: Does a pull down stairs, installed in the ceiling of an attached garage, have to meet the requirements for opening protection?

**Code reference: R309**

**Answer:** Yes, attic access doors in garage ceilings need to meet the opening protection requirement for garage separation per section R309.1. This is a change in the interpretation that was issued in 1993 by the Department of Insurance that allowed pull down stairs to be exempt. This will be enforced on any structure finalled after March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006.

**Acceptable alternates:**

1. Extend the drywall separation on wall between house and garage all the way to roof deck, where possible, so that ceiling 1/2" sheetrock is not required.
2. Cover thin pull down door with 1/2" sheetrock or minimum 3/8" fire treated plywood adequately attached to garage side (Note: door must close completely and additional weight of sheetrock/plywood may require some type of lock, barrel bolt or other closure device to hold shut). Fire treated plywood must be factory stamped similar to what is used on townhouse roof decking at party walls.
3. Non-combustible metal door openings or pull down stairs.
4. Scuttle hole lids will need to be trimmed out with 2x material, not thin profile door or window trim/casing, to hold in place during a fire event. Other non-combustible attachments like barrel bolts, hinge and hasp could be used.
5. Cover scuttle hole lids or pull down stair doors with adequately attached 24 gage (0.48mm) sheet steel as allowed for duct penetrations listed under R309.1.1.

Approved By Gene Morton

Date 2/24/06