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BUILDING SAFETY AND ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

A Building Codes Quick Reference Guide for ADUs

This reference guide is meant to highlight the basics on what to expect for Building Code requirements on fire-life-safety and utilities for an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). Please note this is not an all-inclusive list. For further reference, please consult the entire code listed at the bottom of the page and consult with your registered design professionals for your project.

HVAC SYSTEMS – HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING

Units shall have individual systems that meet heating capacity requirements. Verification needs to be provided that heating system will adequately heat the space using a design temp of 5° outside, if primary heat source is not adequate at 5° exterior temperature then automatic backup heat needs be provided (R303.10 ORSC). Units shall have access to control the HVAC systems for their dwelling unit (R303.10 ORSC). Dwelling units shall not share air transfer systems (M1602.2 #6 ORSC).

- **Note regarding Combustion Air:** When existing area(s) are converted to an ADU, all existing fuel fired equipment, including but not limited to a furnace or water heater, within that area(s) must be supplied with adequate combustion air that complies with Chapter 17 of the ORSC.
- **Note regarding gas pipe sizing:** Sizing shall comply with G2413 of the ORSC and sizing chart provided. The gas line downstream from the meter may have to be upsized depending on upstream demand.

PLUMBING SYSTEM

The ADU and the primary dwelling unit shall have plumbing systems as follows:

1. **Water Supply** - For a common water supply, all of the following are required:
 - a. Conversions or additions – Each individual fixture has a shut-off valve or a whole dwelling shut off valve is installed, accessible to both units.
 - b. New construction. Each unit is supplied with a control valve accessible to that unit.
 - c. Shared water heating shall have individual unit shut-offs installed, accessible to both units.
 - d. The water supply line downstream from the meter may also need to be up-sized depending on the number of fixtures being added. (OPSC 606.3,606, 610)

2. **Sewer** – When the floor level of the ADU is lower than the next upstream manhole cover in the street, a backwater valve(s) for the drain piping serving each new plumbing fixture on that floor in the ADU is required. For basement conversions, the drain piping serving the plumbing fixture(s) located above the required level of backflow protection cannot drain through the backwater valve(s) serving the new basement plumbing fixture(s), and it must connect to the building sewer downstream from the new basement fixture(s). When a backwater valve(s) is installed, it must remain accessible for maintenance and replacement within the ADU. (OPSC 710)
 - a. **Note regarding plumbing system:** For detached ADU, the water supply and sewer shall be separate and independent systems from other buildings and shall not be installed under other buildings. Code requires that building sewers be a minimum of 5' away from any other building. If rerouting of the lines cannot be done because of the existing sewer lateral depth or warranted conditions exist making rerouting impractical then an application for an Alternate Means and Methods would need to be submitted for approval. If approved the material below the other building would need to be adequately sized and approved for inside the building (OPSC 311.1, 312.3).

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Each dwelling unit shall have access to all overcurrent devices (i.e. breakers) on circuits that supply that dwelling unit. Access shall not require going into another dwelling unit. Shared access for both units is acceptable, but area must be accessed separate from dwelling units. Shared access in areas such as a garage are not allowed unless otherwise approved by the building official based on site specific conditions and letter of acknowledgement from owner allowing access (OESC 240.24 B).

FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY

1. **Addressing** - ADU's will require an address and unit designation that is visible from the street of the address, if this is not possible a monument or sign needs to be provided to identify the structure at the street. The primary dwelling will also need to have the unit designation added. (R319)

Note: Units accessed off an alley are encouraged but not required to provide visible address from the alley for first responders.
2. **Occupant Designation** - Submittal drawings used to permit ADUs shall have clearly labeled rooms which indicate the occupant of the space. For example:
 - a. ADU Tenant
 - b. Primary Dwelling

These labels are the basis for reviewing submittals for compliant fire, sound transmission (STC), and impact isolation (IIC) separations. (ORSC R302,3, Appx. K)

Note: for additional information on attached or detached structure requirements see

Insert link to residential detached or attached structures and fire separations document

3. **Attached ADUs: Separation between dwellings and accessory space** – Except as modified within this document, dwellings shall be separated from each other and their accessory space by wall and floor assemblies having not less than one-hour fire-resistance rating, 45-STC, and a 45-IIC rating for floor / ceiling assemblies. Appendix K 102.1.
 - a. **New Construction and Remodel/Alteration of Existing Conditions** – Where a wall or floor/ceiling is constructed, such wall or floor/ceiling shall be constructed to comply with the Oregon Residential Specialty Code (ORSC) requirements for two-family dwellings (ORSC R302.3).
 - i. A door between dwelling units shall be allowed provided that door is:
 1. Minimum sixty-minute fire-resistance rated; and
 2. Self-closing; and
 3. Smoke gasketed.
 - ii. Supporting Construction. Walls supporting rated floor/ceiling assembly must have equivalent rating. All sides below rated floor/ceiling assembly regardless of joist orientation are considered supporting framing. Walls may be rated from inside only when not required to rated based on fire separation distance elsewhere in the code. Openings in supporting walls are not required to be rated unless required elsewhere in code (i.e. garage/dwelling separation wall. (ORSC R302.3, R302.6)
 - iii. Smoke alarms shall comply with NFPA 72 and ORSC R314 including hard wired smoke alarms in new and existing sleeping rooms. Battery powered smoke alarms are acceptable in existing sections when wall and ceiling finishes are not removed (ORSC R314.6).
4. **Detached ADUs: Separation between detached dwellings**
 - a. Minimum 6 feet separation between units or fire-rated construction per ORSC R302.1
 - b. Smoke alarms shall comply with NFPA 72 and ORSC R314 including hard wired smoke alarms in new and existing sleeping rooms. Battery powered smoke alarms are acceptable in existing sections when wall and ceiling finishes are not removed.

References

- 2023 Oregon Residential Specialty Code
- 2023 Oregon Electrical Specialty Code
- 2023 Oregon Plumbing Specialty Code
- 2019 NFPA 72: National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code



Accommodation Information for People with Disabilities

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille, large print, electronic formats, etc., please contact the Building Safety Division at building@bendoregon.gov or 541-388-5580. Relay Users Dial 7-1-1.