



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Department of Permits & Inspections

Jan H. Gardner
County Executive

Steven C. Horn, Division Director
Gary W. Hessong, Director

Current in-house policies and enforcement requirements for roof mounted solar panels on residential structures

The following are internal policies agreed upon by Plan Review and Inspections for the approval of permit applications and enforcement of installation codes:

1. Current code edition in effect is 2015 IRC first edition and all items of section R324 apply unless noted otherwise by these policies.
2. Any permits approved prior to August 15, 2015 do not have to comply with access requirements. Revisions to those permits after this approval date will require all work to comply with current codes.
3. Plan submittal not showing access paths or lacking sufficient information shall be denied and resubmitted for permit approval.
4. Access pathways must be clearly marked and dimensioned on a roof plan.
5. Ridge access and clearance must also be marked and dimensioned.
6. A minimum of 3 feet clear space at all points shall be provided around all solid fuel-burning chimneys for emergency access and maintenance.
7. Multiple roof access points and roof planes will be considered as access areas where complex roofs are involved.
8. A minimum of one access pathway must be clear of doors, windows, or openings below.
9. Roof planes are considered the same if the vertical difference in height is 30" or less.
10. Small gables or dormers (decorative or over-framed areas) can contain solar panels without access or clearances to the ridge.
11. Any roof that does or could contain habitable space beneath it must comply with the access requirements.
12. Townhouse roofs can have panels extending to edge of end unit (exterior wall) however access requirements are still enforced.
13. Townhouses must have a minimum 18" clearance from each side of the party wall providing the roof planes of each unit are contiguous (see #9 above).
14. A central 4' min. wide access pathway could be sufficient for ridge access providing the opposite roof plane is accessible.

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15. The ridge clearance can be reduced to 18” providing the opposite roof plane is accessible and does not contain solar panels.
16. Vents and other small obstacles are not recommended to occur within the access pathways. If undue hardships require vents and other small obstacles to be located within the access pathway then a minimum clear 24” wide area for the total length of the pathway must be available within the 36” wide access pathway for the placement of emergency equipment and rescue personnel.
17. Vents or other roof penetrations used for ventilation purposes must be open and unobstructed by solar panels or hardware.
18. Accessory structures that contain or possibly could have habitable space beneath the roof must provide access pathways and clearances as noted in the code.
19. Non-habitable accessory structures (detached 1-story garages, sheds, barns, and similar structures) do not have to comply with access requirements.
20. Unique conditions or obstacles should be discussed with Plan Review staff prior to permit application and a solution agreeable to both parties shall be allowed providing the solution meets the ‘intent of the code’.

March 8, 2016