

MECHANICAL CODE DISCUSSION

Existing Common Vents in Multi-Family Buildings



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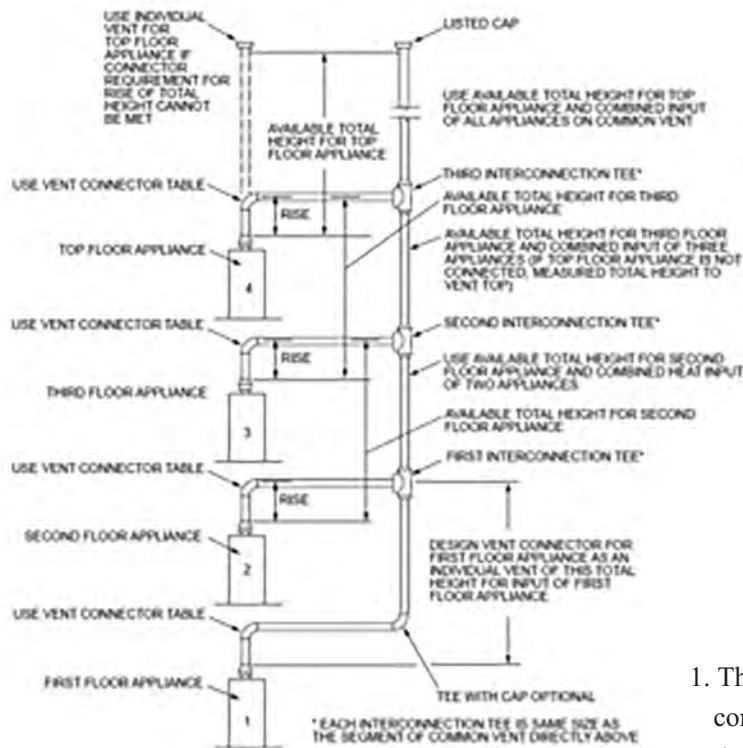
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MANY OF YOU HAVE contacted me with questions on how to legally perform a furnace replacement, with an old standing pilot, natural draft furnace, in an existing apartment project, with common vents, and furnace room access from within the apartment/ dwelling unit. The issue of course is the required vent system upgrades where an 80% AFUE furnace replaces a natural draft 65% or lower efficiency furnace.

While working at Salt Lake County, I was pulled into a situation where the gas company had shut off a 76-year-old widow's furnace, simply because it was tied into a common vent. The story ended up on Gephardt, an experience my employer required me to go through, which I did *not* enjoy. <https://kutv.com/news/get-gephardt/shut-off-how-new-safety-standards-could-leave-you-without-heat-in-your-home>

The International Fuel Gas Code, states: “**503.6.11.1 Appliance separation.** Appliances connected to the common vent shall be located in



rooms separated from occupiable space. Each of these rooms shall have provisions for an adequate supply of combustion, ventilation and dilution air that is not supplied from an occupiable space.”

If the furnace and water heater are located in a room off an exterior deck, there is no issue. The new furnace maybe be connected to the existing B-vent, when proper vent connector and vent sizing is compliant with current requirements. If the furnace/water heater room is not separated from the occupiable space, we have a problem.

This year, the 2019 Legislature

approved an amendment to this section of the code, put forth by the UBCC Mechanical Advisory Committee which I chair, allowing furnace and water heater replacements in these situations, but only if all the following requirements are met. The amendment reads:

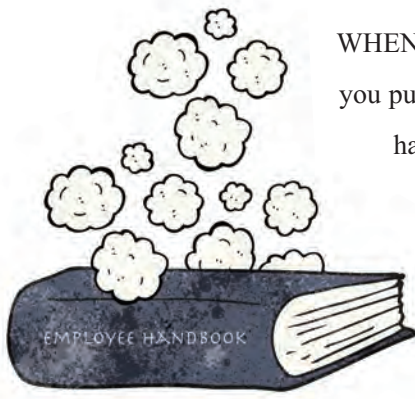
Exception: Existing and replacement Category I appliances may be located in rooms within the occupiable space provided all the following are met:

1. The original installation was compliant with existing codes at the time of installation.
2. The dwelling is equipped with a current, operable carbon monoxide detector, installed in accordance with Section 915 of the International Building Code.
3. The AHJ has approved a replacement based on the extreme difficulty of an installing individual Category I vent system or a direct vent Category IV appliance.
4. The room or space is used for no other purpose.
5. Combustion air is provided in accordance with Section 304.



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WHEN IS THE LAST TIME you pulled out your employee handbook? If it has been a while, it is likely time to review it. Does it surround topics like marijuana, the e-cigarette, and social

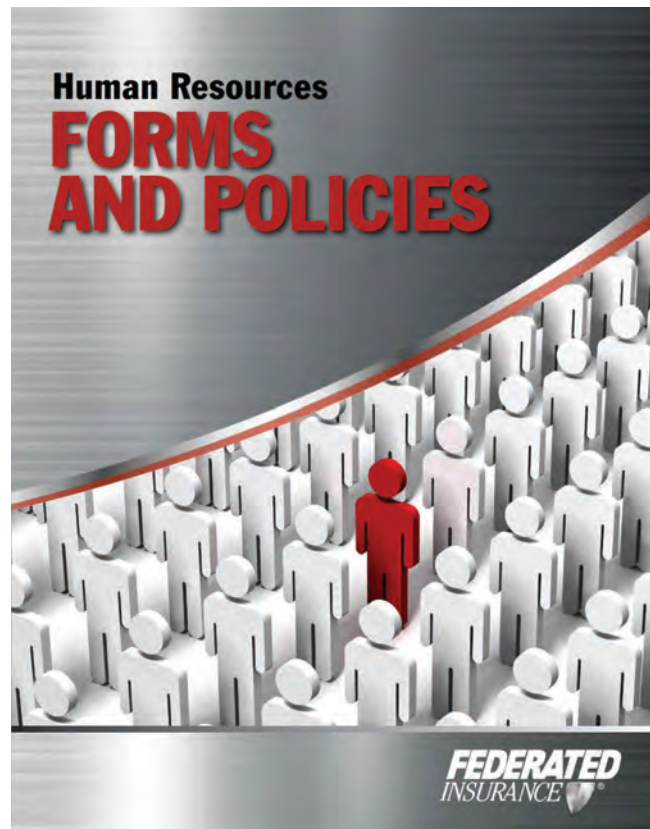
media policies? Do you have a digital copy that is easy (?) for employees to access?

Your company handbook essentially serves as a rulebook for your employees. Not only should it define general policies like vacation, holidays, and retirement, but it can also be your first line of defense in an employment-related claim or lawsuit. Policies that are clear and distributed uniformly to employees may not prevent a claim or lawsuit, but can help establish a record of sound employment practices in your business. Handbooks that are outdated or incorrectly worded, however, can hurt an otherwise defensible situation.

Additional Resource: Whether you need to build an entire handbook from scratch, build a single policy, or update relevant sections of your current handbook, we can help you

get connected to the tools you need.

Federated insureds have access to a handbook builder on the Federated Employment Practices Network. To access the network, contact Federated's agent Jim Brown at jcbrown@fedins.com.



Where outdoor combustion air is provided, the room has a solid weather-stripped door equipped with an approved self-closure device.

6. Common vents terminate with a listed cap.

Please note, you cannot simply

replace the furnace. You and the AHJ (authority having jurisdiction) or building inspector must agree it will be extremely difficult to install a new **individual** Category I (B-vent) or to install a direct vent Category IV appliance. Additionally, there must be a CO detector on every level the dwelling unit, proper combustion air, and a list

vent top. The mechanical contractor installing the new furnace or water heater must insure compliance with every requirement defined in this amendment.

*Contact me if you have any questions.
Best regards —Brent ■*