

Local Building Inspection Departments

Memorandum

To: Building Contractors, Architects, Engineers, and Property Owners

From: Stephen Holden, Chief Building Official-Burke County *SH*
Robin Soots, Chief Building Official-Caldwell County *RS*
Armin Wallner, Chief Building Official-Catawba County *ajw*
Mike Crotts, Chief Building Official-City of Morganton *mc*
Wayne Godfrey, Chief Building Official-Lincoln County *W. G.*

Date: October 11th, 2006

Re: Retaining walls, Piers, Docks, Bulkheads & Waterway Structures on Residential & Commercial Sites

An advisory letter by the office of the Attorney General concludes that structures built on residential property, which are outside the scope of the Residential Code, must conform to the requirements of the Building Code (unless specifically exempt). Such structures include retaining walls, piers, docks, bulkheads, etc. Since there are no prescriptive requirements in the Building Code, these structures must be designed by an architect or engineer unless an approved design can be found in an approved national standard. Permits must be issued for these structures and they must be inspected for conformance to the building Code and to the design.

NC Residential Code section 404.1.3 footnote #2: Retaining wall systems that cross over adjacent property lines regardless of vertical height and retaining walls with more than 48" of unbalanced backfill located on residential sites shall be designed by a NC registered design professional.

NC Building Code section 1610.3: Retaining wall systems shall be designed under the responsible charge of a NC registered professional to resist lateral soil loads specified in Table 1610.1. Retaining walls exceeding 5' shall be inspected by a NC registered design professional.

NC Building Code Chapter 36 requires that docks, piers, catwalks, bulkheads, and other retaining walls located on residential property shall be designed by a NC registered design professional. If you have any questions please contact your local inspection department for assistance. This policy will be effective January 1st 2007.

Burke County Building Inspections (828) 438-5420
Caldwell County Building Inspection (828) 426-8585
Catawba County Building Services Division (828) 465-8454
City of Morganton Building Inspections (828) 438-5271
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