



New Energy Code Adopted for Georgia: EarthCraft Builders Still Ahead of the Curve

By Southface Energy Institute

As of Jan. 1, Georgians can breathe a little easier as the state adopts a new energy code, based on the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). The IECC is the national energy standard model certified by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in compliance with the Energy Policy Act (EPAct). Every state is charged with reviewing and adopting the IECC as its state building energy code to set higher standards for building construction. Georgia adopted the code in fall 2007 after many hours of discussion among building science professionals, code officials, the Georgia Energy Facilities Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and representatives from associated industries.

Approximately 40 percent of Atlanta's regional air pollution is the result of energy produced to serve buildings. Every improvement in the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings helps to clear the air and enhance public health.

Of course, EarthCraft House builders have little to be concerned with since they already are building to a standard well above code. However, there are some details that builders will want to become familiar with, such as the changes to sealed crawlspace insulation.

For example, a sealed crawlspace provides superior energy efficiency and comfort compared to a vented crawlspace. Crawlspace walls can be insulated when the area isn't vented to the outside. This is an alternative to insulating floors over crawlspaces, which typically requires less material and remains in place better over the long term.

In this case, crawlspace wall insulation "must be permanently fastened to the wall and extend downward to within nine inches of the finished interior grade adjacent to the foundation wall." In addition, "a three-inch inspection/view strip immediately below the floor joists shall be provided to permit inspections for termites." An optional, removable plug of insulation may be installed in these locations to make the insulation coverage more complete, but a builder is not required to do this.

More details are included in a two-page guide to IECC Compliance for Home in Georgia, which can be downloaded at www.reca-codes.org/pages/codes2006/Georgia.pdf.

With the adoption of the new code, the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the DOE have asked Southface to conduct energy code workshops throughout the state. Southface staff will be teaching classes for the residential and commercial energy code. Potential attendees include builders, contractors, architects, designers, code officials, engineers and home owners. For locations and dates of workshops, visit the calendar of events page at www.southface.org.

For more information on the energy code adoption, visit the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Web site at www.dca.state.ga.us.

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