

Converting a Structure to a Dwelling

Concerning your inquiry involving converting a detached garage into a single-family residence. The following are major items that you should be aware of in making this transition from the structures current state to being compliant with the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code. Note that without a full set of building plans for review, a full review cannot be performed. There will be other topics that are not addressed. The list will at least provide you insight to your inquiry.

When a structure is changed into a single-family residence occupancy, the ENTIRE Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code is applied to the building. {See SPS 320.04 (4)} Although owners may comment that the building was “existing”, the original building was designed as a detached garage, or an agricultural structure (pole barn), or a commercial structure following criteria, which are applicable to that structure and its intended use. Therefore, reference to “existing” in the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code is to existing One & Two Family Dwellings, and NOT just any standing building. This has always been the policy given to us from the Division of Safety & Buildings.

Please note the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code consists of five chapters.

SPS 320 – Administration and Enforcement

SPS 321 – Construction Standards

SPS 322 – Energy Conservation

SPS 323 – Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning

SPS 324 – Electrical

SPS 325 – Plumbing

You may view and print out the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code and Commentary at the following website <http://dsps.wi.gov/Programs/Industry-Services/Industry-Services-Programs/One-and-Two-Family-UDC/UDC-Admin-Code/>

You may purchase a copy of the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code and Commentary at the following website <https://docsales.wi.gov/> follow the how to order instructions.

Please note the listed issues below are NOT a full list of requirements for change from a structure to a one & two family dwelling. There may be several others depending on your specific situation.

1. All the required plans and data specified in SPS 320.09 (5) need to be submitted.
2. All loads and materials must comply with SPS 321.02.
3. Exits must comply with SPS 321.03.
4. Stairs, guardrails, and handrails must comply with SPS 321.04.
5. Smoke & carbon monoxide detectors must comply with SPS 321.09.
6. Footings shall comply with SPS 321.15 (2)
7. Floating slabs shall comply with SPS 321.15.
8. Frost protection shall comply with SPS 321.16.
9. Wood frame floors shall comply with SPS 321.22.
10. Exterior covering shall comply with SPS 321.24
11. Walls shall comply with SPS 321.25.
12. Braced wall lines and bracing methods shall comply with SPS 321.25 (8) and shall be shown on the plans per SPS 320.09 (5)(b)2.d.
13. Roof framing shall comply with SPS 321.27.
14. The dwelling thermal envelope shall comply with SPS 322.30 – SPS 322.39.
15. Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning shall comply with SPS 323.

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16. Electrical systems shall comply with SPS 324.
17. Plumbing systems shall comply with SPS 325.
18. Any portion of the structure that exists and does not meet the minimum requirements of the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code will need to be brought into compliance.