

PLUMBING AND MECHANICAL
INTERPRETATION MANUAL



CODE: 2000 IRC

DATE:

CODE REF: Section 2005.2.1

11/3/2003

SUBJECT: Access To Water Heaters

Question: Are water heaters that were installed with out ladder access above a drop ceiling required to have ladder access as required by the Section 2005.2.1 when they are replaced?

Answer: Although it is clear that IRC 2005.2.1 requires ladder access for all water heater installations that are 8 ft above the floor, it was an approved practice at one time to allow water heaters to be installed above drops ceilings where the water heater could be reached from a portable ladder.

Section 102.7.1 of the IRC states the following:

Additions, alterations or repairs to any structure shall conform to that required for a new structure without requiring the existing structure to comply with all of the requirements of this code, unless otherwise stated. Additions, alterations or repairs shall not cause an existing structure to become unsafe or adversely affect the performance of the building.

According Section R102.7.1 a deviation from this code is permitted with prior approval. If a water heater that is 20 gallons or less in capacity and use electricity as fuel source and was installed and approved at the time of installation is not required to met the requirement of the

This exception applies only to water heater replacements and not relocations or remodeling of a lease space where the water heater is to be relocated. If the remodel involves the relocation of the water heater the installation must comply with the current provisions of the UPC. This exception is not all-inclusive and does not apply to other code requirements related to the replacement of water heaters. That is to say that even though a water heater may have been installed prior to the enforcement of our present code this exception only applies to the requirement of Section.

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