



New Castle County Government Center
87 Reads Way
New Castle, DE 19720
Department of Land Use - Building Inspections

Date: **February 27, 2009**
Subject: **Rooftop access**
References: **2006 International Mechanical Code**

This Staff Code Interpretation is intended to be used to clarify Sections 306.5 of the International Mechanical Code.

Below is the exact text from the sections of the codes in question:

Section 306.5, Equipment and appliances on roofs or elevated structures. Where equipment and appliances requiring access are installed on roofs or elevated structures at a height exceeding 16 feet, such access shall be provided by a permanent approved means of access, the extent of which shall be from grade or floor level to the equipment and appliances' level service space. Such access shall not require climbing over obstructions greater than 30 inches high or walking on roofs having a slope greater than 4 units vertical in 12 units horizontal.

Question: This section requires a permanent approved means of access for equipment and appliances where such equipment is installed on roofs or elevated structures at a height exceeding 16 feet. Where is this 16' measured from? Is it measured from the roof below if on an elevated structure or is it measured to grade regardless of the roof height? Our specific situation involves a building owner that, without a permanent ladder, would require service personnel to hand carry a 12' ladder through a roof access hatch, across a lower roof for appx. 150', climb an 18' permanent vertical ladder to the upper roof where the appliance in question is located, and then use a portable ladder to access the RTU.

Answer: The intent of Section 306.5 is for service personnel to not have to use a portable ladder to reach appliance or equipment service levels that are greater than 16 feet above the surface below the equipment or appliance. The surface below could be grade, a roof, or a floor. The code is not concerned about the difficulty in moving portable ladders into position but is concerned about the safety of personnel working off of tall portable ladders. Because the RTU is 12 feet or less above the surface below the RTU, the arrangement appears to comply with the intent of the code.

STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION

Code Updates: The requirements of this section are unchanged with the adoption of the 2015 IMC.

George O. Haggerty
Code Official

STAFF CODE INTERPRETATION