

5 COMMON CODE VIOLATIONS

Housing Department

1. Missing or defective GFCIs

Ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection **is** now required for outlets in the kitchen, bathroom and garage and for all outdoor circuits. It cuts power to a circuit if it detects a current change, protecting against electrical shocks. Test for presence of GFCIs by plugging a GFCI receptacle tester (\$15 at home centers) into an outlet in each of these areas. It'll detect whether there's a GFCI on the circuit and other wiring problems, such as reverse polarity and open grounds.

2. Handrails without returns

Codes require handrails to have “returns”, meaning they need to turn and end at the wall. Returns keep items such as sleeves and purse straps from getting caught on the end of the rails and causing a fall. Handrails need to be placed 34 to 38 in. above the nose of the stair treads and must be 1-1/4 to 2-5/8 in. thick.

3. Improper bathroom venting

Bathroom exhaust fans should vent to the outside, either through the roof or the side of the house, not into the attic. Stick your head into the attic to see how yours is vented. Venting the warm, moist air into the attic can cause rotting in the roof framing and sheathing and may not properly rid the bathroom of moisture, leading to mold and mildew.

4. Missing deck flashing

Flashing needs to be installed between the deck ledger board and the house and the ledger needs to be firmly attached. A building inspector we talked to said incorrectly installed ledgers are the main cause of problems in do-it-yourself decks because the ledger may pull loose from the house. These decks can actually collapse, especially when loaded with people.

5. Misplaced smoke alarms

Codes require a smoke alarm on *each* level of the house and outside *each* bedroom. Codes require *new* homes to have a smoke alarm in each bedroom, hand-wired with a battery backup and interconnected so if one activates, they all go off. Ceiling-mounted alarms should be installed at least 4 in. away from walls and wall-mounted alarms 4 to 12 in. down from the ceiling.

For pictures of these five common code violations and their solutions, visit us online at www.mbpi.org/housing.