

MODEL HOME ACCESS

Questions and Answers

NC Accessibility Code Section 3.1.3 Model Home Access

An accessible path of travel is required from the parking area to the following specific locations when model homes are provided:

1. to the Sales Center;
2. to the model home entrance;
3. to the path of travel between models.

When the Sales Center is located in the house, an accessible path of travel is required to the area where the Sales center is located within the house. If the Sales Center is in the garage, then access between the garage and entrance to the house is required, but an accessible path of travel through the house is not required. The model home itself is considered a display area, requiring access to and from, but not through, the house.

Access to the models and to upper floors of the models may be provided by equivalent facilitation, i.e., brochures, photos, videos and other means of providing information. Chapter 26 requirements will apply to the sales area in addition other NCAC requirements. There is no requirement for the path of travel between the models to be covered.

The NC Plumbing Code, The NC Accessibility Code and Plumbing Facilities

What options are available to satisfy Plumbing Code and Accessibility Code requirements for toilet facilities in or at residential dwellings used for model homes? If temporary facilities are incorporated, what are the requirements for their use? What options are available for the use of permanent facilities?

When a residential dwelling is used as a model home, there are several different scenarios as to how the situation may occur. The following addresses each of the various options and is based on the following premise:

BASIC PREMISE: Once a business office is located within a residential dwelling, that office is considered a permanent business office in accordance with the NC Plumbing Code. As such, the Plumbing Code requires permanent plumbing fixtures as long as the sales office or design center is located either in the model home or the garage.

The NC Accessibility Code simply follows the Plumbing Code and requires that whatever fixtures are provided be accessible [NCAC 11.1.1 + 11.1.2]

If the Sales office is located in the model:

- provide permanent accessible plumbing fixtures in model or in garage per NCAC 11.8 (unisex toilet)
- if local plumbing official permits use of port-a-potties, provide accessible port-a-potty for everyone to use (see next bullet item below)
- able-bodied personnel cannot use permanent fixtures in house + have persons with disabilities use accessible port-a-potty

If the Sales office is located in the garage:

- provide permanent accessible plumbing fixtures in model or garage per NCAC 11.8 (unisex toilet)
- if local plumbing official permits use of port-a-potties, provide accessible port-a-potty for everyone to use (see next bullet item below)
- able-bodied personnel cannot use permanent fixtures in house + have persons with disabilities use accessible port-a-potty

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Question: Regarding the last bullet in each of the two scenarios above, if accessible portable facilities are utilized:

1. Can an "out of order" sign be placed on the door to the permanent fixture locations in the house, or
2. Can the water supply to the fixtures be shut off, or
3. Do the fixtures have to be disconnected from water distribution and DWV systems (this option has potential to get messy).

Answer: The water supply to the fixtures would have to be shut off. Simply posting an out of order sign would not be acceptable because in-house staff would be aware that the sign was not accurate and may continue to use the facilities, contrary to the 3rd bulleted item.

Common Use Areas

Question: If a townhouse project in a gated community has single story units located in buildings containing less than four units per building does a swimming pool located on the property for the residents have to have an accessible path, gate latch, etc?

Answer: Common use areas are commercial buildings that are required to comply with the NC Accessibility Code irrespective of whether they are associated with single family dwellings or a townhouse project in a gated community where the number of units is less than what falls under either the federal FHAct or Ch. 30. So the short answer is yes, the path of travel to the pool area is required to be accessible, the door hardware is required to be accessible, etc.