



# CRAWL SPACE BUILDING CODES AND BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

If you are ready to encapsulate your crawl space, here is a comprehensive sample of common building code requirements and best practices that will ensure a viable project and healthy home. It is always wise to check with your local regulatory department before proceeding with your project to make sure you are in compliance with all the unique code requirements of your area.

	BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	✓ DONE
1	<b>Seal or Remove Crawl Space Vents</b>	Building codes do not require vents when properly encapsulating a crawl space with a Class I vapor retarder and conditioned air supply is in place (2015 IRC – Section R408.3).	
2	<b>Access Door Must Conform to Specifications</b>	Any access door to the crawl space must be at least 18x24 inches (2015 International Residential Code (IRC) - Section R408.4).	
3	<b>Vapor Retarder Must Be Used on the Ground</b>	Exposed earth in unvented crawl space foundations shall be covered with a continuous, minimum 6-mil polyethylene vapor retarder (2012 IRC Section R408.2) and it must be a Class I vapor retarder (IRC 2012 – N1102.1.10). Vapor barriers should be secured to the ground floor, covering any exposed dirt. Joints must overlap no less than 6 inches, and all seams must be taped (2015 IRC - Section 408.3.1).	
4	<b>Drain and Vent Terminations Need to Meet Specifications</b>	Any drain located in the crawl space must be allowed to run off and terminate outdoors or to an interior crawl space drain or sump pump. Crawl space drains may not run off to gutters or foundation perimeter drains, and dryer vents must be terminated outdoors (2015 IRC – Sections R405 and P2719).	
5	<b>Damp Proofing Materials for Outside Walls May Be Necessary</b>	If the outside grade is higher than the inside grade of the crawl space, the exterior walls of the crawl space need to contain a damp proofing material. Damp proof materials must also be added at the top of the footing of the finished grade (2015 IRC - Section R406).	
6	<b>Air in the Crawl Space Must Be Handled Properly</b>	If installing a Class I vapor retarder on the ground and up the vertical wall a minimum of 6 inches, it is required that the crawl space has either continuously operated mechanical exhaust ventilation, or conditioned air supply. Acceptable methods of mechanical drying are permanent dehumidifiers, supply air from the HVAC, conditioned air from the living space above, or exhaust fans (2015 IRC – Section R408.3.2.2.2).	
7	<b>Insulation Requirements Must Be Met</b>	Thermal insulation must be located on the walls in a conditioned crawl space if the floor and wall is encapsulated with a Class I vapor retarder. (Source: 2015 IRC – Section R408.3.2.2.2) Foam insulation boards must include a thermal barrier, which protects it against ignition. Porous insulation materials should not have ground contact (2015 IRC – Section R402.2.11 and Appendix N1102.2.11).	
<b>ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES</b>			
1	<b>Caulks and Sealants Must Conform to Specifications</b>	Caulking or sealants should be used to block air flow at each space separating the crawl space from the outside. Special attention should be given to areas between sill plates, the foundation, and any openings at plumbing pipes, as well as penetrations at electrical, gas, and mechanical lines.	
2	<b>Termite Inspection Gap Should Be in Place</b>	Before encapsulating your crawl space, you will want to double-check with your local building code regarding details on termite inspection gaps. Some states will require a clear, unobstructed three-inch minimum gap between the top of the wall liner and the bottom of the wood sill. This will enable termite inspections without the necessity of removing or disturbing the encapsulation envelope.	
3	<b>Pay Attention to Permeance</b>	Even though the IRC requires a minimum 6-mil vapor retarder, many crawl space contractors use heavier gauge materials for durability and permeance. Commonly made up of recycled plastics, 6-mil poly is a weak vapor retarder and one that allows too much moisture vapor to pass through the liner. By investing in a lower permeance vapor barrier at the start, you will minimize moisture problems in the future.	

# What Are My Local Crawl Space BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS?

P2 of 2

Knowing the minimum code requirements that govern the design and construction of your upcoming crawl space encapsulation project is a great place to begin so that you can make sure your work is in compliance. Once you know these minimum requirements, and bearing in mind that they are only minimums, you can then determine where you may wish to exceed them for the betterment of your project.

**Step 1:** Go to the International Code Council (ICC) website: <https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/>

**Step 2:** Hover over your state and click on it to locate your state's adopted International Residential Code (IRC).

**Step 3:** Every state has adopted a version of the IRC (i.e. 2000, 2003, 2012, 2015, etc.). Click on a year then search for an icon labeled International Residential Code or an icon referencing residential codes. Click on the icon to access the actual code. If you do not see your state's adopted residential code, you will need to search online for your local building code by either city or county.

**Step 4:** For your adopted crawl space code, refer to Chapter 4 Foundations, Section R408.

## Informative Blog

As a homeowner or contractor, you know all too well the importance of being informed about options available for crawl space protection. Visit [www.stegoindustries.com/blog](http://www.stegoindustries.com/blog) where you'll find lots of insightful articles that you may find helpful in making a smart decision about crawl space encapsulation.

**Stego® Industries** is a leader in moisture protection products and strives to exceed industry standards and customer expectations. When looking for a high-quality vapor barrier for your crawl space, StegoCrawl is an easy-to-install solution that has been certified to exceed industry standards.



## Contact

Please contact us to get in touch with the nearest Stego representative for information regarding pricing, samples or where to purchase StegoCrawl products.  
[www.stegoindustries.com/contact-us](http://www.stegoindustries.com/contact-us) | 877-464-7834