



Deck Stairway Illumination

Issued by: *Eric M. Maup, P.E.*

Building Official

Effective: April 15, 1997

Revised: August 22, 2019

The International Residential Code (IRC), establishes the requirements for the illumination of stairways, which includes stairways associated with decks. There are numerous ways of complying with the stairway illumination requirements. Prince William County will accept the following prescriptive methods as complying with the IRC:

1. Install an exterior 60 watt light fixture within 5 feet horizontal distance from the top landing of the stairway. The light fixture must be positioned to light the top landing and the stairway.
2. Install an exterior 150 watt flood light fixture within 30 feet horizontal distance from the top landing of the stairway. The light fixture must be positioned to light the top landing and the stairway.
3. Install low voltage light fixtures that are approved for exterior use. A low voltage light fixture must be installed at each step. Also, one fixture must be installed on the walkway within 3 feet of the bottom step. Any wiring must be installed and secured in a safe manner. The low voltage lights may be plugged into an exterior GFCI electrical outlet with an In-Use Weatherproof Cover (NEMA 3R Rated) or hard wired into the electrical panel box in the house.
4. If you have an alternate method of complying with the illumination requirements submit a letter to the Building Official with your justification and analysis for consideration.

An electrical permit and inspection are required for the installation of the exterior 60 or 150 watt light fixture. For the low voltage lighting installation, an electrical permit and inspection are only required when the low voltage lights are hard wired into the electrical panel box. If the electrical work is performed by a licensed electrical contractor, a Limited Service Permit may be obtained, and the work may be certified by the contractor in lieu of an inspection.

During the final inspection of the deck, the inspector will verify that the required stairway illumination has been provided.