

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-31-99

June 9, 1999

The following is offered in response to your letter in which you request a formal interpretation of the requirement for an exterior air supply for masonry fireplaces constructed in Use Group R-4 dwellings governed by the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question: Is it mandatory to provide all new masonry fireplaces with an exterior air supply?

Answer: Yes. Section 1006.1 of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling portion of the 1999 State Building Code states: "Factory-built or masonry fireplaces covered in this chapter shall be equipped with an exterior air supply to assure proper fuel combustion." The use of the mandatory "shall" indicates that all fireplaces, including those constructed of masonry, must be equipped with an exterior air supply. Keep in mind, however, the language of section 1006.4 which states that the exterior air inlet is permitted to be within 24 inches of the firebox opening on or near the floor. This permissive language gives the option of constructing the exterior air supply independently of the masonry construction, as long as all provisions of the code are met.