

## STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-12-06

May 22, 2006

The following is offered in response to your letter to me dated May 12, 2006 in which you seek a formal interpretation of the provisions of Section R311.5.8.1 of the 2003 International Residential Code portion of the 2005 State Building Code.

**Question:** Where is the measurement taken when determining the 26 inch minimum clear width of a spiral stairway?

**Answer:** Section R311.5.8.1 states in part that spiral stairways shall have a minimum width of 26 inches, but does not detail how such width is to be determined. Section R311.5.8 indicates that spiral stairs shall meet all requirements of Section R311.5 except as indicated in Section R311.5.8.1. In accordance with R311.5.8, we must therefore refer to R311.5 to determine the method of measuring width. R311.5.1 tells us that the minimum clear width of a stair is measured above the permitted handrail height and below the required headroom height. Thus, in a spiral stair, all areas above the handrail and below 6 feet 6 inches shall be a minimum of 26 inches in clear width. Since a spiral stairway has only a single handrail on its outer circumference, that handrail is permitted to encroach on the 26 inch clear width a maximum of 4 ½ inches leaving a minimum clear width at and below the handrail of 21 ½ inches. Any trim or nosing provided at the hole in the floor through which the stair extends must not encroach on the 26 inch minimum width at any point above the handrail up to a height of 6 feet 6 inches above any tread.