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Industrialized Housing and Buildings

Technical Bulletin

IHB TB 08-02 – Attic Access Requirements (IRC)

Issued April 24, 2008

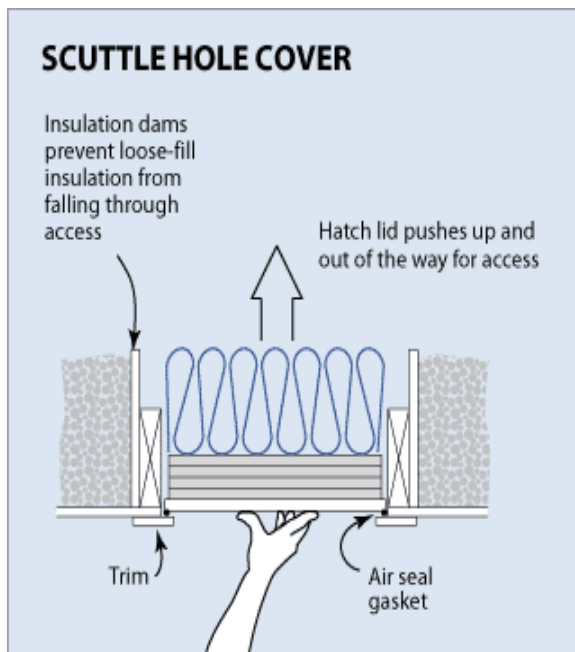
Revised July 2, 2012

§ R807 of the 2006 International Residential Code (IRC) requires an attic access opening to be provided in buildings with combustible ceiling or roof construction for attic areas that exceed 30 square feet and that have a vertical height of 30 inches or greater. The opening shall not be less than 22 inches by 30 inches and shall be located in a hallway or other **readily accessible location**. A readily accessible location means a location that may be reached directly without items that need to be moved in order to gain access. An access opening located in a closet where shelving and storage interfere with access would not be considered a readily accessible location.

A 30-inch minimum unobstructed headroom in the attic space shall be provided at some point above the access opening. A larger access opening may be required in accordance with § M1305.1.3 of the IRC where mechanical equipment is located in the attic.

§ 402.4.1 of the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) requires the building envelope to be durably sealed to limit air infiltration. All sources of possible air infiltration are required to be caulked, gasketed, weatherstripped, wrapped, or otherwise sealed to limit air movement. Additionally, the access hole cover, commonly called a “*scuttle hole cover*” must be insulated to the same R-value as required for the roof/ceiling construction [§ 402.1.3 of the 2009 IECC].

The following demonstrates typical construction that may be used to comply with these code requirements.



- ✓ For air sealing, weatherstripping can be installed either on the hatch itself or on the inside of the trim or base where the hatch rests. Adding a latch bolt will help ensure a tighter seal.
- ✓ After the trim or base is aligned to seal properly, insulation shall be added to the attic side of the hatch. Rigid insulated sheathing is recommended. Cut the insulated sheathing 1/4 inch smaller than the hatch size to allow for clearance when moving the access panel. Apply 3 or 4 inches of insulation to the hatch with construction adhesive and screws.
- ✓ As an added measure, glue the kraft-paper side of batt insulation to the top of the last layer of rigid insulation. The goal is to achieve the required R-value for the roof/ceiling construction.
- ✓ Note that the use of rigid foam insulation on the top of the scuttle hole cover will require that the cover material be a minimum of 1/2" gypsum or 3/4" plywood or OSB to comply with the requirement for a thermal barrier between foam insulation and the interior of the building as required by § R316.4 of the 2009 IRC.

IHB TB 04-02

July 23, 2004

Page 2 of 2