

The Rules Are Basic

By Joseph P. Guzzo

I receive many calls and e-mails asking code questions. I think one of the reasons for these calls is that I am usually helpful. There's a concept, being helpful. Much of the time the caller simply can't find the section of the code that has what they are searching for. Many answers may not be found in the particular section one would think it should be. Rather, answers can be found in three sections unique to our State Code 248 C.M.R. They are in plumbing, Basic Principles and Definitions, and in gas they are called Rules.

Rules can be found in section 4.00 Massachusetts Modifications. Mass. Modifications are exactly that, modifications the State has made to the National Gas Code N.F.P.A. 54 we have adopted. In addition to modifying certain sections of the National Gas Code the State has added twenty five (25) rules. Again specific to Massachusetts only. Following are a few of these rules all plumbers and gas fitters must be aware of. Rule #3- *In cases of emergency a gas appliance may be turned on temporarily by the licensed installer provided:*

- a. the installer has tested the piping in accordance with the appropriate section of 248 c.m.r.*
- b. the installer and the supplier are satisfied that the installation of piping and use of the equipment will assure safe operation; and*
- c. the Inspector (or chief inspector if more than one inspector) is notified and a regular inspection is made at the earliest opportunity but no later than the next working day.*

The key to rule #3 is in cases of emergency. The Inspector will allow some leverage for things like loss of heat or hot water, and gas leaks. But the rule should not be taken advantage of, like two weeks later the plumber comes in for a permit, "oh by the way this was an emergency"

Rule #5- *Each trailer that is used in any way for human occupation and incorporates a gas piping system shall be inspected by the inspector in every location and relocation where such trailer is in use and reconnected to a fuel gas source that is regulated by 248 c.m.r. 3.00 through 7.00*

This is a little known regulation, and I would surmise seldom enforced. Most of these trailers would be supplied with L.P. Gas therefore, the gas supplier must be responsible to file for a permit, and call for an inspection.

Rule #8- *Exception to Permit Requirements of 248 C.M.R. 3.00 No permit shall be required for;*

- a. the adjusting of gas appliance controls, the adjusting of gas flames, the replacement of gas controls, the installation or replacing of gas meters and regulators, and the servicing of gas appliances shall be deemed work for which no permit shall be required.*
- b. The restoration of gas service after a gas meter or meter fit is relocated under the following rules; 1. The work shall be done by authorized employees of gas companies organized under M.G.L. c.164. 2. The required gas piping reconnection shall not exceed ten feet. 3. The gas piping reconnections shall be labeled by the installing gas company.*

Read these rules carefully, you will see that 8a was written for appliance service people, and gas company workers. However most utility gas companies do not service gas appliances anymore. And it does not include the replacement of a gas appliance. 8b was

designed only for gas company workers when relocating a gas meter. Ten feet is the maximum they may run on the house side of the meter without a permit.

Rule #14- Surveyed. Prior to the commencement of work, all portions of existing systems that are directly affected by the proposed gas fitting work shall be surveyed by the licensed plumber or gas fitter to insure that the existing work is adequate to support the proposed work. The primary intent of rule #14 is for sizing the gas piping system.

However all plumbers and gas fitters should always thoroughly survey the job for safety and code compliance, see Rules #10 and 11.

Rule #16- Utility Gas and Undiluted Liquefied Petroleum Gas Systems within the same building.

A. Utility gas and L.P. gas systems shall not be installed within the same building except where the Board has first granted Special Permission under 248 c.m.r. 3.00.

B. When the two gas systems are installed within the same building, the natural gas piping system shall be color coded yellow and the L.P. gas piping system colored green.

C. Labeling The gas piping systems shall be labeled, 1. At a minimum of every ten feet, 2. At all changes of direction. 3. On each side of a penetration through a partition, wall or ceiling and, 4. At every gas shut off valve. 5 The labels shall be, colored yellow with black lettering, indicating the type of gas and the pressure contained within the piping system, and the letters shall be sized so that the labeling can be read from a normal line of vision when standing at the main floor level.

Some important points about Rule #16. The two systems must be within the same building. For example you could have natural gas in the main house and L.P. gas in the garage as long as the garage is not attached. Or L.P. gas for a pool heater, this would be allowed without a special permit. If the two systems are within the building a permit called a Dual Fuel Permit must be obtained from the State. And labeling is very important to assure that anyone performing future work will know there are two systems. In addition the Local Fire Department must be notified, so in case of a fire and the utility gas is shut off in the street, they will also know there is another source of gas that must also be shut off at the L.P. tank.

Those are just a few of the 25 gas rules. Book mark this section, and highlight the rules that are important to you. Navigating the code is the first thing I would teach my students. Knowing your code will save time and help avoid mistakes.

Next issue we will review Basic Principles, another very important section of the code.