

Gas Ranges and Clearance to Combustibles

By Joseph P. Guzzo

How easy is this, I could recite the code word for word when it comes to installing a gas range, or so I thought. The standard installation for household cooking appliances is 30" to combustibles, or 24" when the underside is protected, a ventilation hood is installed, or a upper cooking appliance is installed according to the upper appliances clearance.



Regulations for household cooking appliances can be found in N.F.P.A. 54, Chapter, 9. For the most part these regulations are written for a standard gas range, the kind you would find in the average persons home. In fact in the hand book there is a photo of a range, the identical range I have in my kitchen.

However the standard stove has become less and less popular, who wants to be average anyway. Many homeowners are opting for so called high end appliances. Many of these appliances look like commercial products. They are big and heavy. Many are made of expensive stainless steel and have multiple burners. All of these stoves have there own clearances to combustibles clearly written in the manufacturers instructions. For Example, For a 60" Wolf range the minimum vertical clearance between the gas range and combustible materials above the range is 44". For a Thermador range the distance to the bottom of the hood is 30", and 40" to an unprotected cabinet. For a Bosch range the maximum that an overhead cabinet may protrude over the range is 13" with or without a hood . And most of these products require a hood above the range vented to the outside, this is not a code requirement. One important note, the equipment must be rated for residential use, if installed in a residence. This also will be clearly stated in the instructions.

The important thing to remember is that the manufactures installation instructions most always supersede the code. Quote, ***"The readers attention is directed particularly to the following subsection 9.1.1, listed gas utilization equipment shall be installed in accordance with their listing and the manufactures instructions. This statement applies to all of Chapter 9. The chapter contains requirements that apply to the range of appliances manufactured. Listing of the appliance allows instruction specific to the appliance tested to be included in the manufactures installation instructions and may supersede the specific requirements of Chapter 9"***. This is true for all gas equipment.

So this is what happens when you become complacent. Perhaps after all these years I am starting to lose my edge, or maybe not. I'm just glad I have people around to jump start me back to form. In this case I have Bill Kinsman Plumbing Inspector from The Town of Needham to thank. Bill is one of the most knowledgeable inspectors I know. Why? Because he is a good reader. I have learned that many people miss the point simply by not reading the entire section of the code they are researching. Some would read the first couple of lines and think they have the answer, but miss much of the most important parts.

I have been sharing information with other inspectors from the beginning 20 years ago. I can safely say it is the most important resource any inspector can have. And like Bill, inspectors must also be good listeners, and never be afraid to admit they missed something or were wrong.