



## Informal Interpretation Report Number 5712



**Date** May 22, 2008

**Edition** 2004

**Section** R311.5.8.3

### **Question:**

Is it the intent of R311.5.8.3 to provide a Florida modification to the IRC tread depth at the codeline, or walkline, from 11 inches to 9 inches, and must the treads of a circular stairway comply with the dimensional criteria of winders?

### **Answer**

There is no requirement in the IRC stairway requirements for a tread depth of 11 inches. The IRC calls for a minimum tread depth of 10 inches measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at a right angle to the tread's leading edge. For winder treads the IRC permits a minimum tread depth of 10 inches at a point 12 inches from the side where the treads are narrower with a minimum winder tread depth of 6 inches. (R311.5.3.2) The FBCR adds a classification of stairs not found in the IRC, Circular, and seems to combine the FFPC provisions for curved stairs and winders found in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. The provisions presumably are to allow for a stair with a more gradual turn than a spiral stair. (i.e. monumental stairs of yore.) The provisions contained in the FBCR, except for a reduction of minimum tread depth from 10 inches to 9 inches with a 1 inch nosing, are identical to those for existing curved stairs in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. (s.7.2.2.2.2) New curved stairs in the FFPC are required to provide a minimum tread depth of 11 inches. This is the only occurrence of the 11 inch tread that is found. In addition, the FFPC contains a section addressing winders that differs from curved stairs by limiting the narrow side to not less than 6 inches while curved stairs

provide the smallest radius is not less than twice the stair width. (s.7.2.2.2.4 and 7.2.2.2.2) Having said all that, no, the intent is not to provide a Florida Specific Amendment to reduce the base code tread depth from 11 to 9 inches as there is no 11 inch requirement.

### **Commentary:**

The intent is to incorporate the Florida Specific Amendment changing the base code requirement for a minimum tread depth for stairs of 10 inches to a minimum tread depth of 9 inches with treads less than 10 inches in depth required to provide a 1 inch nosing. The tread depth change was made to correct an erroneous assumption in the first edition of the FBC 2004 that a 10 inch tread is the same as a 9 inch tread with a 1 inch nosing. There is a considerable difference in the amount of space needed for the former due to differences in where the measurements are taken. The 9 inch tread with the 1 inch nosing provides the same amount of "stepping area" and can be built in less space. Regarding the final question as to compliance with the dimensional criteria of winders, for circular stairs the dimensional criteria for the tread and the smaller radius of S.R311.5.8.3 are applicable. While the code section on circular stairways in the FBCR does not state where the tread width is measured in relation to the narrow side of the stair, winders are required to provide the minimum depth at 12 inches from where the treads are narrower. (s.R311.5.2) In addition, the FFPC provisions for curved stairs stipulate at a point 12 inches from the narrower end of the tread.(s.7.2.2.2.1) In my opinion, therefore, it is reasonable to specify the dimension be taken at 12 inches from the narrow end.

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### **Notice:**

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