

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner



Division of Fire Safety
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

Office: NH Incident Management Center, 110 Smokey Bear Blvd., Concord, NH
Mailing Address: 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03305
603-271-3294, FAX 603-271-3206
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964 ARSON HOTLINE 1-800-400-3526

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NATIONAL FUEL GAS CODE ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS
NFPA 54, 2002 EDITION

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify some confusion that may exist regarding the electrical requirements for gas appliances. The New Hampshire State Fire Marshal's Office has learned that some local officials have been enacting local requirements to install a 'light switch' type switch outside the room in which a gas appliance is installed. This is in direct conflict with the state fire code. NFPA 54.9.7.4 does not allow for a 'light switch'. (See 9.7.4 below)

9.7.1 Electrical Connections

Electrical connections between appliances and the building wiring, including the grounding of the appliances, shall conform to NFPA 70, National Electrical Code.

9.7.2 Electrical Ignition and Control Devices

Electrical ignition, burner control, and electrical vent damper devices shall not permit unsafe operation of the appliance in the event of electrical power interruption or when the power is restored.

9.7.3 Electrical Circuit

The electrical circuit employed for operating the automatic main gas-control valve, automatic pilot, room temperature thermostat, limit control, or other electrical devices used with the appliances shall be in accordance with the wiring diagrams certified or approved by the original appliance manufacturer.

9.7.4 Continuous Power

All appliances using electrical controls shall have the controls connected into a permanently live electrical circuit — that is, one that is not controlled by a light switch. Central heating appliances shall be provided with a separate electrical circuit.

The argument offered has been that firefighters are accustomed to having a 'light switch' type shut off for oil-burning appliances. Since oil-burning and gas appliances possess different properties and operational characteristics, no compelling argument can be made in support of a local ordinance. A failure in a gas appliance can cause an explosive atmosphere to exist inside the structure.

Firefighters are cautioned to use appropriate personal protective equipment and combustible gas meters when responding to incidents involving gas appliances. If combustible gas is present, then the gas should be shut off outside the building and the building should be ventilated prior to entry.

The state fire code is a minimum requirement. Any local ordinance adopted that would allow for a lower level of fire safety would be in conflict with the state fire code. **Saf-C 6005 Exceptions and Variances** from the state fire code states; *“The state fire marshal shall grant exceptions or variances to the state fire code to the extent that such action will provide a degree of safety substantially equivalent to that provided under the provisions from which the exception or variance is granted”*. Also, the last sentence of **RSA 153:5** states, *‘Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent municipalities from adopting bylaws or ordinances relative to a subject area of rules adopted by the fire marshal in accordance with this section if such bylaws or ordinances are no less restrictive than those adopted by the fire marshal.’*

As always, if you have any questions or need clarification, please don't hesitate to call our office at (603) 271-3294 or contact us by e-mail at fmo@dos.nh.gov.