

TOWNSHIP OF SAUGATUCK

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Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator

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To: Contractors and potential homeowners

Over the past few months I have received many complaints regarding numerous problems with water infiltration into dwellings, which over the course of many years, have never had any water problems in the past. I have also been informed by some homeowners that sump pumps are operating much more frequently, leading to equipment failure and a flooded basement or crawl space. There has been several double digit rainfalls in 2008 over a short period of time and a severe, rapid high volume snow melt coupled with unseasonal high temperatures and drenching rainfall. There has also been surface water problems which cause erosion and seepage into buildings.

In order to alleviate some of these potential problems, I wish to inform both contractors and homeowners contemplating a residential building project that the Building Code requirements regarding drainage are your responsibility, either individually or shared between builder and owner.

Therefore, prior to construction, the homeowner and/or builder must determine the elevation of the dwelling in relation to the seasonal high water table and the building site. If you think that there will be no water related problems with the dwelling contemplated without an engineering study to determine the seasonal high water table or potential site drainage, then you will be responsible for any future water infiltration issues. On some sites, the building's footings may be able to be placed 9 feet below existing grade, whereas, on another site the footings may need to be located on existing grade, and on a third site fill may need to be brought in to elevate the site to avoid water problems. Section R405.1 of the Michigan Residential Code requires drainage tile around foundations that retain earth and enclose habitable or usable space located below grade. The tile shall be installed at or below the area to be protected and shall discharge by gravity of mechanical means to an approved drainage system. There is an exception which allows that a drainage system is not required if the foundation is installed on well drained ground or on sand-gravel mixture soils classified as Group I, which is detailed in Table R405.1 found in the Residential Code. If you choose the

exception, I expect a soil boring certification from a registered Professional Engineer(PE) and a statement as builder and/or homeowner that you are requesting the exception to the Code section.

Section 401.3 requires that surface water be diverted to a storm sewer or other point of collection. The lot shall be graded away from the foundation walls with a minimum fall of six inches within the first ten feet. An exception would allow for the creation of swales or drains within the ten foot area if lot lines, walls, slopes or other physical barriers prohibit the 6 inch drop away from the dwelling. The addition of gutters and groundcover will also greatly alleviate surface water erosion and seepage.

If there are any questions, please contact me at my home office or the Township Hall. Proper determination during the planning stage of a project regarding elevation of the dwelling and placement of drain tile will eliminate most all of the problems associated with ground water and surface water infiltration into the house. .

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