**Minimum Room Areas** By Martin Van Berlo, Emmet County Building Dept.

While typically not a problem in most of the homes constructed today, the 2003 Michigan Residential Code (MRC) has a section listing the requirements for minimum room sizes, minimum ceiling heights, and minimum clearances for the placement of bathroom fixtures.

Section R304 of the 2003 MRC contains the requirements for minimum room sizes. This section tells us that at least one habitable room in a dwelling unit must have at least 120 square feet of floor area. Other habitable rooms must be at least 70 square feet in area with the exception of kitchens. The code definition of a habitable space is as follows;

“A space in a building for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.”

So the minimum room sizes, shown in Section R304, would be required for all rooms except those noted in the definition as not considered habitable space. The code also requires habitable rooms to have a minimum horizontal dimension of 7 feet.

Section R305 is the section that addresses minimum ceiling heights. This section tells us that the minimum height for ceilings in habitable rooms, hallways, corridors, bathrooms, toilet rooms, laundry rooms and basements must be at least 7 feet in height. This measurement is taken from the finished floor material to the lowest projection of the ceiling. There are a few exceptions to this minimum height requirement. Those exceptions include;

1. Beams and girders spaced not less than 4 feet on center may project not more than 6 inches below the required ceiling height.
2. Ceilings in basements that do not contain habitable space may have a minimum height of 6'-8".
3. Not more than 50% of the required floor space of a room or space is permitted to have a sloped ceiling height of less than 7 feet, with no portion of the required floor area less than 5 feet in height.
4. Bathrooms shall have a minimum ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches over the fixture and at the front clearance area for fixtures as shown in figure R307.2. A shower stall or tub equipped with a showerhead shall have a minimum ceiling height of 6 feet 8 inches above a minimum area 30 inches by 30 inches at the showerhead. (this exception is new to the building code)

Section R307 gives the code requirements for minimum spacing between bathroom fixtures. Fixtures are required to be spaced at least to the measurements noted in the figures shown here. This section also states that bathtub and shower floors and walls, with a showerhead installed, are required to be finished with a non-absorbent surface for at least 6 feet up from the floor.

By following these code sections, all the rooms in a building project will be properly designed for area, size and height. Proper spacing of fixtures will meet code compliance, thereby making an inspection much easier to approve.