

OVER-THE-RANGE (OTR) MICROWAVES

DISCUSSION

Article 9.10.22.1. of the Alberta Building Code specifies minimum vertical clearances that need to be maintained between ranges and the framing, finishes, and cabinetry above them. However, the Code does not contain any provisions specifically for clearances above ranges involving over-the-range (OTR) appliances, particularly microwaves. There has been an ongoing debate for a period of years as to whether vertical clearances for OTR microwaves are intended to be regulated by Article 9.10.22.1. or whether such clearances are not governed by the Code at all.

Furthermore, OTR microwaves do not have a standard referenced in the Code prescribing the criteria under which the microwave is to be tested. Microwaves carry a certification label indicating that the electrical components function safely and are compatible with the line current into which they are plugged into, but there is no test standard for distances to combustible materials.

This STANDATA has been developed to clarify the applicability of the Alberta Building Code with regard to microwaves installed above ranges.

CODE REFERENCES

1. Sentence 9.10.22.1.(2) states:

9.10.22.1. Installation of Ranges

...

2) Clearances for and protection around gas, propane and electric *ranges* shall be not less than those provided in Articles 9.10.22.2. and 9.10.22.3.

2. Article 9.10.22.2. states:

9.10.22.2. Vertical Clearances above Ranges

1) Except as provided in Sentence (2), framing, finishes and cabinetry installed directly above the location of the *range* shall be not less than 750 mm above the level of *range* burners or elements.

2) The vertical clearance described in Sentence (1) for framing, finishes and cabinets located directly above the location of the *range* may be reduced to 600 mm above the level of the elements or burners, provided the framing, finishes, and cabinets
a) are *noncombustible*, or

Unless stated otherwise, all Code references in this STANDATA are to Division B of the Alberta Building Code 2006.

- b) are protected by
- i) asbestos millboard not less than 6 mm thick, covered with sheet metal not less than 0.33 mm thick, or
 - ii) a metal hood with a 125 mm projection beyond the framing, finishes and cabinets.

INTERPRETATION

The Alberta Building Code 2006 does not govern vertical clearances for over-the-range microwaves. Subsection 9.10.21. is intended to apply to the surrounding combustibility of the wall construction and cabinetry, and does not regulate portable plug-in appliances such as OTR microwaves.

Installation manuals for OTR microwaves typically cover clearances and other specifications related to their installation, and they should be installed in accordance with those instructions.

This INTERPRETATION is applicable throughout the province of Alberta.