



PATRIOT CRAWL SPACE CODE REFERENCE

VEBC vs. New Construction, Encapsulation, Structural Repairs, and Permitting Requirements

INTRODUCTION: Avoiding Scare Tactics and Misleading Claims

Some contractors scare homeowners by falsely claiming: “You must bring your crawl space up to full new-construction code.” This is wrong and used to upsell unnecessary projects. The truth: existing homes fall under the Virginia Existing Building Code (VEBC), not the new-construction IRC, and VEBC does not require full-code upgrades for normal crawl space repairs.

1. VEBC vs. New Construction Code (IRC)

New Construction Code applies to new homes, additions, and redesigns. VEBC applies to almost all crawl space repairs in existing homes and avoids forcing homeowners into unnecessary upgrades.

2. VEBC LEVEL 1 ALTERATIONS

Most crawl space work falls under Level 1, defined as repairs that do not reconfigure the structure or alter the load path. This includes sistering joists, replacing girders like-for-like, adding piers, installing vapor barriers, installing drains, sump pumps, encapsulation, dehumidifiers, and removing insulation for sanitation.

3. Insulation Removal

Under VEBC, insulation may be removed and not reinstalled when damaged by rodents, moisture, mold, or contamination. Modern crawl space systems do not require under-floor insulation.

4. When Permits ARE Required

A permit is required when structural supports are moved, the load path is altered, structural redesign occurs, or when new electrical outlets or circuits are added.

5. When Permits Are NOT Required

Sistering joists, replacing beams like-for-like, adding supplemental supports, installing vapor barriers, drains, encapsulation, dehumidifiers, removing insulation, and

installing monitoring devices do not require permits under VEBC.

6. ELECTRICAL PERMITS — Patriot's Policy

Patriot ALWAYS pulls electrical permits for sump pumps and dehumidifiers because we add new outlets, circuits, or GFCI receptacles. Plug-in units do not need permits, but Patriot installs permanent, code-compliant electrical systems with licensed electricians.

7. Crawl Space Encapsulation Code Pathways (R408.3)

Encapsulation is a VEBC Level 1 repair. It requires a vapor barrier and moisture control. This satisfies IRC R408.3 exceptions.

8. The 1/1500 Vent Rule

When a Class I vapor retarder covers the soil, ventilation may be reduced to 1 sq. ft. per 1500 sq. ft. of crawl space.

9. Crawl Door Louver Rule

A crawl space is only a “closed crawl space” under new-construction rules if all vents are sealed permanently. Patriot installs crawl doors with removable louver panels, maintaining vent classification and avoiding new-construction requirements.

10. Summary — Patriot's Code-Compliant Approach

VEBC governs nearly ALL crawl space repairs. Insulation removal is allowed. Structural permits are only needed when load paths change. Electrical permits are ALWAYS pulled by Patriot for sump pumps and dehumidifiers. Encapsulation is legal under R408.3, and the 1/1500 rule applies. Crawl door louvers prevent reclassification.