907.2.10.1.2 Groups R-2, R-3, R-4 and I-1. Single- or multiple-station smoke alarms shall be installed and maintained in Groups R-2, R-3, R-4 and I-1 regardless of occupant load at all of the following locations:

1. On the ceiling or wall outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms.

2. In each room used for sleeping purposes.

3. In each story within a dwelling unit, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics. In dwelling units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level.

Q: Do the provisions of Section 907.2.10.1.2 in the 2003 International Fire Code require smoke alarms to be installed in all new one- and two-family dwellings?

A: No. The smoke alarm provisions of the International Fire Code are only applicable to one- and two-family dwelling buildings constructed under the International Building Code and classified in Group R by that code. They do not apply to detached one-and two-family dwellings and townhouses not regulated as Group R occupancies and constructed under the International Residential Code.

The ICC Board of Directors, in originally approving the development of the International Residential Code, indicated that it is to be a stand-alone code for the construction of detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with a separate means of egress. All of the provisions for new construction that affect those buildings are to be regulated exclusively by the International Residential Code and are not to be regulated by any other International Code. Section 101.2–Scope, Exception 1 of the International Building Code, stipulates that “Detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories above grade ... shall comply with the International Residential Code”. Therefore, the construction of detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings within the scope of the International Residential Code is not required to comply with the provisions of either the International Building Code or the International Fire Code.

Single- and multiple-station smoke alarm provisions for buildings not regulated in occupancy Group R constructed under the International Residential Code are contained in Section R313 of that code and require that smoke alarms be installed in both new construction and buildings undergoing alterations, repairs or additions.