

Dark Sky Lighting Fixtures

This fact sheet describes a Fort Collins building code change effective January 1, 2012. The requirements apply to all new single-family detached housing, duplexes and townhomes.

Code reference – *International Residential Code (IRC) Sec. R 326.1*

For new buildings, all exterior lighting fixtures shall have the “Fixture Seal of Approval” from the International Dark-Sky Association or meet equivalent criteria approved by the Building Official.

What is “Dark-sky” lighting and why is it important?

Many exterior lighting fixtures project light in many directions. They can be a source of glare, light pollution and light “trespass” onto adjoining properties. These factors can cause safety problems, disrupt wildlife, reduce the view of the night sky and annoy neighbors.

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) is a non-profit organization that works to raise awareness of these issues and the advantages of using more carefully designed fixtures. Fully shielded fixtures (sometimes termed “full-cutoff” or “Dark-sky” fixtures) direct light where it is needed, providing quality lighting without the problems noted above.

How do I comply with the code requirement?

The building code specifically references fixtures that have earned the “Fixture Seal of Approval” from the IDA. A directory of IDA-approved residential fixtures is available on-line: www.darksky.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=720



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The Building Official can also approve the use of other exterior fixtures that meet the intent of the Fixture Seal of Approval (directing light downward, no view of the bulb) or fixtures that are located such that architectural shielding provides the same results.



Some lighting suppliers label exterior fixtures as “Dark-Sky.” The criteria used to categorize these products isn’t always clear or consistent with the IDA’s definition. If you are unsure, check with Building Services Division before making a final selection.

The code requirement does not apply to landscape lighting. However, the City of Fort Collins encourages designers and building owners to take light pollution into account when they consider landscape lighting.

Where are complying light fixtures available?

Compliant light fixtures are available at local lighting supply stores, home-improvement centers and on-line.

For more information

- International Dark Sky Association: www.darksky.org
- IDA brochures and guides:
http://www.darksky.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=708