



Fire-Resistant Residential Construction

The following guide details the portions of the 2015 International Residential Code as it pertains to the building planning aspects of Fire-Resistant Construction as well as both Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detector Requirements. The 2015 Irc is available for free viewing at <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IRC2015>

SECTION R302 FIRE-RESISTANT CONSTRUCTION

R302.1 Exterior walls.

Construction, projections, openings and penetrations of exterior walls of dwellings and accessory buildings shall comply with Table R302.1(1); or dwellings equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section P2904 shall comply with Table R302.1(2).

Exceptions:

1. Walls, projections, openings or penetrations in walls perpendicular to the line used to determine the fire separation distance.
2. Walls of dwellings and accessory structures located on the same lot.
3. Detached tool sheds and storage sheds, playhouses and similar structures exempted from permits are not required to provide wall protection based on location on the lot. Projections beyond the exterior wall shall not extend over the lot line.
4. Detached garages accessory to a dwelling located within 2 feet (610 mm) of a lot line are permitted to have roof eave projections not exceeding 4 inches (102 mm).
5. Foundation vents installed in compliance with this code are permitted.

TABLE R302.1(1)
EXTERIOR WALLS

Exterior Wall Element		Minimum Fire-Resistance Rating	Minimum Fire Separation Distance
Walls	Fire-resistance rated	1 hour-tested I accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263 with exposure from both sides	< 5 Feet
	Not Fire-resistance rated	0 Hours	≥Feet
Projections	Not Allowed	N/A	
	Fire-resistance rated	1 Hour on Underside a b	≥2 feet to <5 feet
	Not Fire-resistance rated	0 Hours	≥5 feet
Openings in Walls	Not Allowed	N/A	<3 feet
	25% Maximum of Wall Area	0 Hours	3 feet
	Unlimited	0 Hours	5 feet
Penetrations	All	Comply with Section R302.4	<3feet
		None Required	3 feet

N/A = Not Applicable.

- a. Roof eave fire-resistance rating shall be permitted to be reduced to 0 hours on the underside of the eave if fireblocking is provided from the wall top plate to the underside of the roof sheathing.
- b. Roof eave fire-resistance rating shall be permitted to be reduced to 0 hours on the underside of the eave provided that gable vent openings are not installed.

TABLE R302.1(2)
EXTERIOR WALLS-DWELLINGS WITH FIRE SPRINKLERS

Exterior Wall Element		Minimum Fire-Resistance Rating	Minimum Fire Separation Distance
Walls	Fire-resistance rated	1 hour-tested I accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263 with exposure from both sides	0 Feet
	Not Fire-resistance rated	0 Hours	3 Feet a
Projections	Not Allowed	N/A	<2 feet
	Fire-resistance rated	1 Hour on Underside b c	2 feet a
	Not Fire-resistance rated	0 Hours	3 feet
Openings in Walls	Not Allowed	N/A	<3 feet
	Unlimited	0 Hours	3 feet a
Penetrations	All	Comply with Section R302.4	<3feet
		None Required	3 feet a

N/A = Not Applicable

- a. For residential subdivisions where all dwellings are equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section P2904, the fire separation distance for nonrated exterior walls and rated projections shall be permitted to be reduced to 0 feet, and unlimited unprotected openings and penetrations shall be permitted, where the adjoining lot provides an open setback yard that is 6 feet or more in width on the opposite side of the property line.
- b. The roof eave fire-resistance rating shall be permitted to be reduced to 0 hours on the underside of the eave if fireblocking is provided from the wall top plate to the underside of the roof sheathing.
- c. The roof eave fire-resistance rating shall be permitted to be reduced to 0 hours on the underside of the eave provided that gable vent openings are not installed.

R302.2 Townhouses.

Common walls separating townhouses shall be assigned a fire-resistance rating in accordance with Section R302.2, Item 1 or 2. The common wall shared by two townhouses shall be constructed without plumbing or mechanical equipment, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall. The wall shall be rated for fire exposure from both sides and shall extend to and be tight against exterior walls and the underside of the roof sheathing. Electrical installations shall be in accordance with Chapters 34 through 43. Penetrations of the membrane of common walls for electrical outlet boxes shall be in accordance with Section R302.4.

1. Where a fire sprinkler system in accordance with Section P2904 is provided, the common wall shall be not less than a 1-hour fire-resistance-rated wall assembly tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263.
2. Where a fire sprinkler system in accordance with Section P2904 is not provided, the common wall shall be not less than a 2-hour fire-resistance-rated wall assembly tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263.

R302.2.1 Continuity.

The fire-resistance-rated wall or assembly separating townhouses shall be continuous from the foundation to the underside of the roof sheathing, deck or slab. The fire-resistance rating shall extend the full length of the wall or assembly, including wall extensions through and separating attached enclosed accessory structures.

R302.2.2 Parapets for townhouses.

Parapets constructed in accordance with Section R302.2.3 shall be constructed for townhouses as an extension of exterior walls or common walls in accordance with the following:

1. Where roof surfaces adjacent to the wall or walls are at the same elevation, the parapet shall extend not less than 30 inches (762 mm) above the roof surfaces.
2. Where roof surfaces adjacent to the wall or walls are at different elevations and the higher roof is not more than 30 inches (762 mm) above the lower roof, the parapet shall extend not less than 30 inches (762 mm) above the lower roof surface.

Exception: A parapet is not required in the preceding two cases where the roof covering complies with a minimum Class C rating as tested in accordance with ASTM E 108 or UL 790 and the roof decking or sheathing is of noncombustible materials or approved fire-retardant-treated wood for a distance of 4 feet (1219 mm) on each side of the wall or walls, or one layer of 5/8-inch (15.9 mm) Type X gypsum board is installed directly beneath the roof decking or sheathing, supported by not less than nominal 2-inch (51 mm) ledgers attached to the sides of the roof framing members, for a distance of not less than 4 feet (1219 mm) on each side of the wall or walls and any openings or penetrations in the roof are not within 4 feet (1219 mm) of the common walls.

3. A parapet is not required where roof surfaces adjacent to the wall or walls are at different elevations and the higher roof is more than 30 inches (762 mm) above the lower roof. The

common wall construction from the lower roof to the underside of the higher roof deck shall have not less than a 1-hour fire-resistance rating. The wall shall be rated for exposure from both sides.

R302.2.3 Parapet construction.

Parapets shall have the same fire-resistance rating as that required for the supporting wall or walls. On any side adjacent to a roof surface, the parapet shall have noncombustible faces for the uppermost 18 inches (457 mm), to include counterflashing and coping materials. Where the roof slopes toward a parapet at slopes greater than 2 units vertical in 12 units horizontal (16.7-percent slope), the parapet shall extend to the same height as any portion of the roof within a distance of 3 feet (914 mm), and the height shall be not less than 30 inches (762 mm).

R302.2.4 Structural independence.

Each individual townhouse shall be structurally independent.

Exceptions:

1. Foundations supporting exterior walls or common walls.
2. Structural roof and wall sheathing from each unit fastened to the common wall framing.
3. Nonstructural wall and roof coverings.
4. Flashing at termination of roof covering over common wall.
5. Townhouses separated by a common wall as provided in Section R302.2, Item 1 or 2.

R302.3 Two-family dwellings.

Dwelling units in two-family dwellings shall be separated from each other by wall and floor assemblies having not less than a 1-hour fire-resistance rating where tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263. Fire-resistance-rated floor/ceiling and wall assemblies shall extend to and be tight against the exterior wall, and wall assemblies shall extend from the foundation to the underside of the roof sheathing.

Exceptions:

1. A fire-resistance rating of 1/2 hour shall be permitted in buildings equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with NFPA 13.
2. Wall assemblies need not extend through attic spaces where the ceiling is protected by not less than 5/8-inch (15.9 mm) Type X gypsum board, an attic draft stop constructed as specified in Section R302.12.1 is provided above and along the wall assembly separating the dwellings and the structural framing supporting the ceiling is protected by not less than 1/2-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum board or equivalent.

R302.3.1 Supporting construction.

Where floor assemblies are required to be fire-resistance rated by Section R302.3, the supporting construction of such assemblies shall have an equal or greater fire-resistance rating.

R302.4 Dwelling unit rated penetrations.

Penetrations of wall or floor-ceiling assemblies required to be fire-resistance rated in accordance with Section R302.2 or R302.3 shall be protected in accordance with this section.

R302.4.1 Through penetrations.

Through penetrations of fire-resistance-rated wall or floor assemblies shall comply with Section R302.4.1.1 or R302.4.1.2.

Exception: Where the penetrating items are steel, ferrous or copper pipes, tubes or conduits, the annular space shall be protected as follows:

1. In concrete or masonry wall or floor assemblies, concrete, grout or mortar shall be permitted where installed to the full thickness of the wall or floor assembly or the thickness required to maintain the fire-resistance rating, provided that both of the following are complied with:

1.1. The nominal diameter of the penetrating item is not more than 6 inches (152 mm).

1.2. The area of the opening through the wall does not exceed 144 square inches (92 900 mm²).

2. The material used to fill the annular space shall prevent the passage of flame and hot gases sufficient to ignite cotton waste where subjected to ASTM E 119 or UL 263 time temperature fire conditions under a positive pressure differential of not less than 0.01 inch of water (3 Pa) at the location of the penetration for the time period equivalent to the fire-resistance rating of the construction penetrated.

R302.4.1.1 Fire-resistance-rated assembly.

Penetrations shall be installed as tested in the approved fire-resistance-rated assembly.

R302.4.1.2 Penetration firestop system.

Penetrations shall be protected by an approved penetration firestop system installed as tested in accordance with ASTM E 814 or UL 1479, with a positive pressure differential of not less than 0.01 inch of water (3 Pa) and shall have an F rating of not less than the required fire-resistance rating of the wall or floor-ceiling assembly penetrated.

R302.4.2 Membrane penetrations.

Membrane penetrations shall comply with Section R302.4.1. Where walls are required to have a fire-resistance rating, recessed fixtures shall be installed so that the required fire-resistance rating will not be reduced.

Exceptions:

1. Membrane penetrations of not more than 2-hour fire-resistance-rated walls and partitions by steel electrical boxes that do not exceed 16 square inches (0.0103 m²) in area provided that the aggregate area of the openings through the membrane does not exceed 100 square inches (0.0645 m²) in any 100 square feet (9.29 m²) of wall area. The annular space between the wall membrane and the box shall not exceed 1/8 inch (3.1 mm). Such boxes on opposite sides of the wall shall be separated by one of the following:

- 1.1. By a horizontal distance of not less than 24 inches (610 mm) where the wall or partition is constructed with individual noncommunicating stud cavities.
- 1.2. By a horizontal distance of not less than the depth of the wall cavity where the wall cavity is filled with cellulose loose-fill, rockwool or slag mineral wool insulation.
- 1.3. By solid fireblocking in accordance with Section R302.11.
- 1.4. By protecting both boxes with listed putty pads.
- 1.5. By other listed materials and methods.

2. Membrane penetrations by listed electrical boxes of any materials provided that the boxes have been tested for use in fire-resistance-rated assemblies and are installed in accordance with the instructions included in the listing. The annular space between the wall membrane and the box shall not exceed 1/8 inch (3.1 mm) unless listed otherwise. Such boxes on opposite sides of the wall shall be separated by one of the following:

- 2.1. By the horizontal distance specified in the listing of the electrical boxes.
- 2.2. By solid fireblocking in accordance with Section R302.11.
- 2.3. By protecting both boxes with listed putty pads.
- 2.4. By other listed materials and methods.

3. The annular space created by the penetration of a fire sprinkler provided that it is covered by a metal escutcheon plate.

R302.5 Dwelling-garage opening and penetration protection.

Openings and penetrations through the walls or ceilings separating the dwelling from the garage shall be in accordance with Sections R302.5.1 through R302.5.3.

R302.5.1 Opening protection.

Openings from a private garage directly into a room used for sleeping purposes shall not be permitted. Other openings between the garage and residence shall be equipped with solid wood doors not less than 13/8 inches (35 mm) in thickness, solid or honeycomb-core steel doors not less than 13/8 inches (35 mm) thick, or 20-minute fire-rated doors, equipped with a self-closing device.

R302.5.2 Duct penetration.

Ducts in the garage and ducts penetrating the walls or ceilings separating the dwelling from the garage shall be constructed of a minimum No. 26 gage (0.48 mm) sheet steel or other approved material and shall not have openings into the garage.

R302.5.3 Other penetrations.

Penetrations through the separation required in Section R302.6 shall be protected as required by Section R302.11, Item 4.

R302.6 Dwelling-garage fire separation.

The garage shall be separated as required by Table R302.6. Openings in garage walls shall comply with Section R302.5. Attachment of gypsum board shall comply with Table R702.3.5. The wall separation provisions of Table R302.6 shall not apply to garage walls that are perpendicular to the adjacent dwelling unit wall.

**TABLE R302.6
DWELLING-GARAGE SEPARATION**

Separation	Material
From the residence and attics	Not less than ½" gypsum board or equivalent applied to the garage side
From habitable rooms above the garage	Not less than 5/8 type x gypsum board or equivalent
Structures supporting floor/ceiling assemblies used for separation required by this section	Not less than ½" gypsum board or equivalent
Garages located less than 3 feet from a dwelling unit on the same lot	Not less than ½" gypsum board or equivalent applied to the interior side of exterior walls that are within this area

R302.7 Under-stair protection.

Enclosed accessible space under stairs shall have walls, under-stair surface and any soffits protected on the enclosed side with 1/2-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum board.

R302.8 Foam plastics.

For requirements for foam plastics, see Section R316.

R302.9 Flame spread index and smoke-developed index for wall and ceiling finishes.

Flame spread and smoke developed indexes for wall and ceiling finishes shall be in accordance with Sections R302.9.1 through R302.9.4.

R302.9.1 Flame spread index.

Wall and ceiling finishes shall have a flame spread index of not greater than 200.

Exception: Flame spread index requirements for finishes shall not apply to trim defined as picture molds, chair rails, baseboards and handrails; to doors and windows or their frames; or to materials that are less than 1/28inch (0.91 mm) in thickness cemented to the surface of walls or ceilings if these materials exhibit flame spread index values not greater than those of paper of this thickness cemented to a noncombustible backing.

R302.9.2 Smoke-developed index.

Wall and ceiling finishes shall have a smoke-developed index of not greater than 450.

R302.9.3 Testing.

Tests shall be made in accordance with ASTM E 84 or UL 723.

R302.9.4 Alternative test method.

As an alternative to having a flame spread index of not greater than 200 and a smoke-developed index of not greater than 450 where tested in accordance with ASTM E 84 or UL 723, wall and ceiling finishes shall be permitted to be tested in accordance with NFPA 286. Materials tested in accordance with NFPA 286 shall meet the following criteria:

The interior finish shall comply with the following:

1. During the 40 kW exposure, flames shall not spread to the ceiling.
2. The flame shall not spread to the outer extremity of the sample on any wall or ceiling.
3. Flashover, as defined in NFPA 286, shall not occur.
4. The peak heat release rate throughout the test shall not exceed 800 kW.
5. The total smoke released throughout the test shall not exceed 1,000 m².

R302.10 Flame spread index and smoke-developed index for insulation.

Flame spread and smoke-developed index for insulation shall be in accordance with Sections R302.10.1 through R302.10.5.

R302.10.1 Insulation.

Insulation materials, including facings, such as vapor retarders and vapor-permeable membranes installed within floor-ceiling assemblies, roof-ceiling assemblies, wall assemblies, crawl spaces and attics shall have a flame spread index not to exceed 25 with an accompanying smoke-developed index not to exceed 450 where tested in accordance with ASTM E 84 or UL 723.

Exceptions:

1. Where such materials are installed in concealed spaces, the flame spread index and smoke-developed index limitations do not apply to the facings, provided that the facing is installed in substantial contact with the unexposed surface of the ceiling, floor or wall finish.
2. Cellulose fiber loose-fill insulation, that is not spray applied, complying with the requirements of Section R302.10.3, shall not be required to meet the smoke-developed index of not more than 450 and shall be required to meet a smoke-developed index of not more than 450 where tested in accordance with CAN/ULC S102.2.
3. Foam plastic insulation shall comply with Section R316.

R302.10.2 Loose-fill insulation.

Loose-fill insulation materials that cannot be mounted in the ASTM E 84 or UL 723 apparatus without a screen or artificial supports shall comply with the flame spread and smoke-developed limits of R302.10.1 where tested in accordance with CAN/ULC S102.2.

Exception: Cellulosic fiber loose-fill insulation shall not be required to be tested in accordance with CAN/ULC S102.2, provided such insulation complies with the requirements of Sections R302.10.1 and R302.10.3.

R302.10.3 Cellulosic fiber loose-fill insulation.

Cellulosic fiber loose-fill insulation shall comply with CPSC 16 CFR, Parts 1209 and 1404. Each package of such insulating material shall be clearly labeled in accordance with CPSC 16 CFR, Parts 1209 and 1404.

R302.10.4 Exposed attic insulation.

Exposed insulation materials installed on attic floors shall have a critical radiant flux not less than 0.12 watt per square centimeter.

R302.10.5 Testing.

Tests for critical radiant flux shall be made in accordance with ASTM E 970.

R302.11 Fireblocking.

In combustible construction, fireblocking shall be provided to cut off both vertical and horizontal concealed draft openings and to form an effective fire barrier between stories, and between a top story and the roof space.

Fireblocking shall be provided in wood-framed construction in the following locations:

1. In concealed spaces of stud walls and partitions, including furred spaces and parallel rows of studs or staggered studs, as follows:
 - 1.1. Vertically at the ceiling and floor levels.
 - 1.2. Horizontally at intervals not exceeding 10 feet (3048 mm).

2. At interconnections between concealed vertical and horizontal spaces such as occur at soffits, drop ceilings and cove ceilings.
3. In concealed spaces between stair stringers at the top and bottom of the run. Enclosed spaces under stairs shall comply with Section R302.7.
4. At openings around vents, pipes, ducts, cables and wires at ceiling and floor level, with an approved material to resist the free passage of flame and products of combustion. The material filling this annular space shall not be required to meet the ASTM E 136 requirements.
5. For the fireblocking of chimneys and fireplaces, see Section R1003.19.
6. Fireblocking of cornices of a two-family dwelling is required at the line of dwelling unit separation.

R302.11.1 Fireblocking materials.

Except as provided in Section R302.11, Item 4, fireblocking shall consist of the following materials.

1. Two-inch (51 mm) nominal lumber.
2. Two thicknesses of 1-inch (25.4 mm) nominal lumber with broken lap joints.
3. One thickness of 23/32-inch (18.3 mm) wood structural panels with joints backed by 23/32-inch (18.3 mm) wood structural panels.
4. One thickness of 3/4-inch (19.1 mm) particleboard with joints backed by 3/4-inch (19.1 mm) particleboard.
5. One-half-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum board.
6. One-quarter inch (6.4 mm) cement-based millboard.
7. Batts or blankets of mineral wool or glass fiber or other approved materials installed in such a manner as to be securely retained in place.
8. Cellulose insulation installed as tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263, for the specific application.

R302.11.1.1 Batts or blankets of mineral or glass fiber.

Batts or blankets of mineral or glass fiber or other approved nonrigid materials shall be permitted for compliance with the 10-foot (3048 mm) horizontal fireblocking in walls constructed using parallel rows of studs or staggered studs.

R302.11.1.2 Unfaced fiberglass.

Unfaced fiberglass batt insulation used as fireblocking shall fill the entire cross section of the wall cavity to a height of not less than 16 inches (406 mm) measured vertically. Where piping, conduit or similar obstructions are encountered, the insulation shall be packed tightly around the obstruction.

R302.11.1.3 Loose-fill insulation material.

Loose-fill insulation material shall not be used as a fireblock unless specifically tested in the form and manner intended for use to demonstrate its ability to remain in place and to retard the spread of fire and hot gases.

R302.11.2 Fireblocking integrity.

The integrity of fireblocks shall be maintained.

R302.12 Draftstopping.

In combustible construction where there is usable space both above and below the concealed space of a floor-ceiling assembly, draftstops shall be installed so that the area of the concealed space does not exceed 1,000 square feet (92.9 m²). Draftstopping shall divide the concealed space into approximately equal areas. Where the assembly is enclosed by a floor membrane above and a ceiling membrane below, draftstopping shall be provided in floor-ceiling assemblies under the following circumstances:

1. Ceiling is suspended under the floor framing.
2. Floor framing is constructed of truss-type open-web or perforated members.

R302.12.1 Materials.

Draftstopping materials shall be not less than 1/2-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum board, 3/8-inch (9.5 mm) wood structural panels or other approved materials adequately supported. Draftstopping shall be installed parallel to the floor framing members unless otherwise approved by the building official. The integrity of the draftstops shall be maintained.

R302.13 Fire protection of floors.

Floor assemblies that are not required elsewhere in this code to be fire-resistance rated, shall be provided with a 1/2-inch (12.7 mm) gypsum wallboard membrane, 5/8-inch (16 mm) wood structural panel membrane, or equivalent on the underside of the floor framing member. Penetrations or openings for ducts, vents, electrical outlets, lighting, devices, luminaires, wires, speakers, drainage, piping and similar openings or penetrations shall be permitted.

Exceptions:

1. Floor assemblies located directly over a space protected by an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section P2904, NFPA 13D, or other approved equivalent sprinkler system.
2. Floor assemblies located directly over a crawl space not intended for storage or fuel-fired appliances.
3. Portions of floor assemblies shall be permitted to be unprotected where complying with the following:
 - 3.1. The aggregate area of the unprotected portions does not exceed 80 square feet (7.4 m²) per story

- 3.2. Fireblocking in accordance with Section R302.11.1 is installed along the perimeter of the unprotected portion to separate the unprotected portion from the remainder of the floor assembly.
4. Wood floor assemblies using dimension lumber or structural composite lumber equal to or greater than 2-inch by 10-inch (50.8 mm by 254 mm) nominal dimension, or other approved floor assemblies demonstrating equivalent fire performance.

R302.14 Combustible insulation clearance.

Combustible insulation shall be separated not less than 3 inches (76 mm) from recessed luminaires, fan motors and other heat-producing devices.

Exception: Where heat-producing devices are listed for lesser clearances, combustible insulation complying with the listing requirements shall be separated in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the listing.

Recessed luminaires installed in the building thermal envelope shall meet the requirements of Section N1102.4.5 of this code.