

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE
AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, POABC

File No: 06-0053

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: June 16, 2009

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2006

Subject: *firewall* between buildings having different roof elevations

Keywords: *firewall*, roof elevations, exterior walls, zero limiting distance

Building Code Reference(s): 3.1.10.1.(2), 3.1.10.3.(1), 3.1.10.4.(2), 3.2.3.7.(1) & (4)

Question:

Sentence 3.1.10.1.(2) is being used to separate a building into 2 buildings by means of a *firewall*, each separated building having a significantly different roof elevation (>3m difference).

Must each wall assembly comprising the *firewall*, extend only to the roof of the building to which it is structurally attached, or must both wall assemblies extend at least to the highest of the 2 roof elevations?

Interpretation:

Sentence 3.1.10.3.(1) indicates a *firewall* must extend from the ground continuously through all storeys of buildings separated by the *firewall*. This is reinforced by Sentence 3.1.10.4.(2) which exempts only the parapet requirement, but not the *firewall* extension, at an upper roof elevation if the difference in roof elevation exceeds 3m.

In the case of 2 separate walls being used to comprise the *firewall*, both walls are required to extend to the higher of the 2 roof elevations. It is noted that the effect of this requirement could be structurally challenging to achieve, particularly if the *firewall* is not of concrete or masonry construction, as Sentence 3.1.10.2.(4) permits.

An alternative approach to using a *firewall* to separate a building into 2 buildings is to design the 2 buildings facing each other with exterior walls at zero limiting distance such that the 2 exterior walls are each constructed under Article 3.2.3.7. In this case each respective wall is only required to terminate at the roof elevation of the building to which it is structurally attached.

Note that whereas *firewalls* are required to be provided with roof parapets in accordance with Article 3.1.10.4., Article 3.2.3.7 does not require roof parapets.

Drawings illustrating the 2 approaches are attached.



R. J. Light, Committee Chair

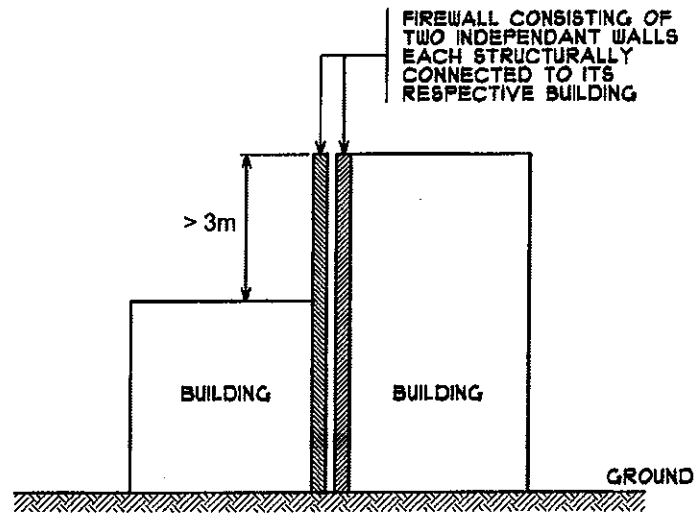
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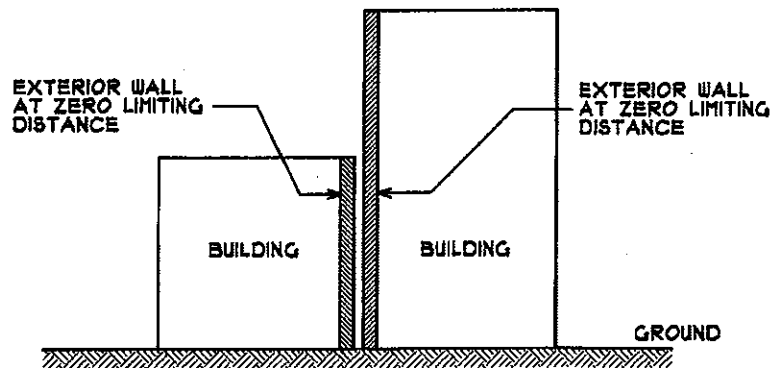
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3.1.10.1.(2) & 3.1.10.3.(1)



3.2.3.7.(1) & (4)