

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

**File No: 98-0111**

**INTERPRETATION**

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Interpretation Date: October 27, 2004

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 1998

Subject: building area

Keywords: building area, exterior walls, balcony, roof structures

Building Code Reference(s): 1.1.3.2. - Definition of "building area"

**Question:**

Building area is defined as the "greatest horizontal area of a building above grade within the outside surface of exterior walls ..."

Since the term "exterior walls" is not defined in the building code, should an open deck, covered balcony or roof canopies be included in the "building area"?

**Interpretation:**

No

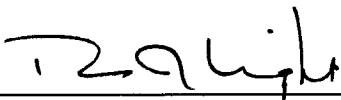
In most instances, for the purposes of calculating building area, exterior walls are interpreted to mean the environmental separation between the exterior and interior spaces. Open decks, covered balconies or roof canopies would not be included in the building area provided they are part of the exterior environment.

In the event that an open balcony is subsequently enclosed with an environmental separation, such enclosed balcony would be included in the building area.

Building area for independent structures that do not have any exterior walls, such as a roof structure supported on 4 posts, would be determined by drawing an imaginary line around the perimeter of the 4 posts. The building area would be the area within the imaginary line.

It should be noted that for spatial separation issues, roof canopies that are attached to the side of a building and that shelter a use could pose a significant threat of fire spread to neighbouring buildings or neighbouring properties if there is storage of combustible materials beneath the canopy. The exposing building face may have to be considered at the outside edge of the canopy, rather than the exterior wall of the building. A detailed review with the authority having jurisdiction is warranted for such canopies and their intended use.

Refer to Building Code Appeal Board ruling #1603 for confirmation of this interpretation.



R. J. Light, Committee Chair