

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0169

INTERPRETATION

Page 1 of 1

Interpretation Date:	March 15, 2022
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2018
Subject:	Application of Spatial Separation Requirements to Skirting of a Portable Classroom
Keywords:	Spatial Separation, Cladding, Noncombustible
Building Code Reference(s):	3.2.3.2.(1) & (2), 3.2.3.7.(1), 3.2.3.7.(3), 3.1.5.5

Question:

A portable school classroom is a modular building supported on wood cribbing. Where Sentence 3.2.3.7.(1) requires noncombustible cladding, is the skirting used to close off the unconditioned space below the floor also required to be noncombustible?

Interpretation:

Yes.

Sentence 3.2.3.2.(1) states that the exposing building face (EBF) area of a wall is based on the wall area from grade to the uppermost ceiling. Sentence 3.2.3.2.(2) allows an EBF to be calculated separately for different fire compartments, where they are separated from other compartments by fire separations with fire-resistance ratings of at least 45 min.

The floor of a portable classroom is typically not constructed as a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating of at least 45 min. Therefore, the space below the floor assembly is part of the same fire compartment as the classroom, and its exterior walls are part of the same EBFs as the classroom. Where Sentence 3.2.3.7.(1) requires noncombustible cladding for an EBF, the skirting that is part of the EBF is also required to be noncombustible.

There is an exception for an EBF permitted to have more than 10% unprotected openings, where Sentence 3.2.3.7.(3) allows combustible cladding in accordance with Article 3.1.5.5 (i.e. cladding that is permitted in a building where noncombustible construction is required). Also, if the floor assembly is actually constructed as at least a 45 min fire separation, the EBF of the space below the floor is likely to be much smaller than the EBF of the classroom, and the spatial separation requirements may be less restrictive.



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

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