



To: Residential Stakeholders
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File: Residential Code Interpretation

INTERPRETATION NUMBER: 20180904

TITLE: Maximum Allowed Openings in Walls
CODE EDITION: 2015 International Residential Code (IRC)
SECTIONS: R302.1 Exterior Walls; Table R302.1(1)
PURPOSE: Clarification to the 25% Maximum of Wall Area allowance for non-sprinklered buildings

CODE INTERPRETATION:

If an exterior wall is 3' to less than 5' from the Fire Separation Line (FSL), a maximum of 25% of its wall area can be open for windows, doors, vent openings, etc. For example, a 30' long wall by 20' high can have 150 Sq Ft of openings. The code does not limit the location or size of the opening(s). As such (1) 7'-6" x 20' window can be placed in the wall.

Where an exterior wall located 5'-0" or more from the fire separation line has a bay window that is located at a distance of less than 5'-0" to 3'-0" from the FSL, the following is allowed:

- The aggregate opening area of the entire wall including the bay window wall shall be limited to 25% of the area of the wall. The size of the bay window openings shall not be further limited.

All portions of the wall located at less than 5'-0" from the FSL shall comply with the fire rating requirements of Table R302.1(1). See page 2 for examples.

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