

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN**NO. AB-010**

DATE : September 18, 2002 (Updated 01/01/2008 for code reference)

SUBJECT : Fire and Life Safety

TITLE : **Local Equivalency for Approval of Communicating Openings Between Buildings on Separate Properties**

PURPOSE : The purpose of this Administrative Bulletin is to provide standards and procedures for the application and case-by-case review of requests for a modification based on local equivalency to allow communicating openings between buildings where such openings do not comply with the strict provisions of the 2007 San Francisco Building Code (SFBC) regarding fire resistance of exterior walls and protection of openings at property lines.

This bulletin permits the continuing application of code provisions of former editions of the SFBC regarding communicating openings. In conformance with current State law, requests for approval of communicating openings will be considered on a case-by-case basis when reasonable equivalency is proposed.

REFERENCE : 2007 San Francisco Building Code (SFBC)
- Section 104A.2.7, Modifications
- Section 104A.2.8, Alternate materials, alternate design and methods of construction
- Section 704.8 Allowable Area of Openings
DBI Administrative Bulletin AB-005, Procedures for Approval of Local Equivalencies

DISCUSSION : Project sponsors may request the application of this local equivalency allowing openings in building walls which connect buildings on separate lots when such openings in exterior walls do not meet the strict provisions of SFBC Section 705 and when it can be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis that there are practical difficulties in meeting the provisions of the code, that the modification is in conformance with the intent and purpose of the code, and that reasonable equivalency is provided in fire-protection and structural integrity.

Such proposed modification may be approved by the Department of Building Inspection and the Fire Department if it conforms with the below listed standard provisions. The Department of Building Inspection and other City departments may impose additional requirements, in addition to those listed below, in the approval of any request for a code modification or alternate based upon individual building and property conditions.

If a project sponsor wishes to propose methods of protection of communicating openings which differ from those listed below, proposals for the use of alternate materials, designs, or methods of construction may be submitted for review in the same manner as for this Local Equivalency. The Department of Building Inspection may require that additional substantiation be provided supporting any claims made for such proposals.

Procedures for Application of Local Equivalencies

Project sponsors wishing to apply Local Equivalencies must fill out and submit the Request for Approval of Local Equivalencies form (Attachment A). Fees to be paid and scheduling of review of requests are as noted on that form. Following Department of Building Inspection review and, when appropriate, San Francisco Fire Department review, each request will either be approved, approved with conditions, disapproved, or placed on "Hold" pending submittal of additional information.

Determinations of the staff of the Department of Building Inspection regarding local equivalencies may be administratively brought for further review to the Deputy Director and the Director of the Department of Building Inspection. Determinations of the Director may be appealed to the Building Inspection Commission or to other designated appeals bodies.

Further details of procedures for the review of local equivalencies may be found in AB-005, Procedures for Approval of Local Equivalencies.

Conditions of Local Equivalency

Communicating openings between new or existing buildings located on real or assumed property lines where such openings are closer to property lines than permitted under SFBC Section 602.1 and Tables 601 and 602 may be permitted on a case-by-case basis when the following provisions or other approved equivalent provisions are met and the project sponsor provides documentation of the practical difficulties involved in carrying out the provisions of the regular code.

The standard provisions for this local equivalency include:

1. The total width of all communicating openings in a building wall shall not exceed 25 percent of the length of the wall at the floor where the openings occur. A single opening shall not exceed 120 square feet. Multiple openings are permitted.
2. Communicating openings in each building shall be protected by approved and listed automatic-closing fire assemblies having fire protection ratings of at least that required for the exterior wall of the building per Tables 601 and 602, or for any occupancy separation required between adjoining occupancies in the separate buildings as prescribed in Table 508.3.3, whichever results in a greater fire-resistive rating. In no case shall the opening protection be less than one-hour. Such fire assemblies shall close in the event of heat or smoke detected on either side of the communicating opening and shall cause a local fire alarm to sound upon closing.
3. All vertical shafts and stairways in each building having communicating openings shall be enclosed on the floor or floors where such communicating openings occur, and on the floors immediately above and below where such communicating openings occur. Enclosures shall be in accordance with Table 6-A and openings into such shaft and stairway enclosures shall comply with SFBC Sections 707 and 1020.
4. The total combined floor area for floor connected by communicating openings shall be the basis for determination of fire sprinkler requirements in accordance with SFBC Section 903.2.
5. A communicating opening shall not adversely affect the lateral force resisting capability of either building and shall not cause the transfer of lateral forces between buildings. Calculations and details substantiating this shall be provided.

6. Fire protection assemblies in communicating openings shall be designed, insofar as practical, to resist blockage and jamming in the case of seismic events.

7. Communicating openings shall not be used as required exits.

8. Sprinklers for exposure protection of the openings shall be installed within 18 inches of the openings in each building. The heads shall be of ordinary temperature, quick-response type and be spaced at six feet on center or at the manufacturer's recommended minimum spacing, whichever provides the closer spacing.

9. The owner of each building having a communicating opening shall provide a recorded statement that such opening(s) will be closed or protected with approved fire-resistive wall construction in the event that either building is altered in such a manner that the communicating openings no longer comply with the provisions of this administrative bulletin.

A permit application and related submittal documents shall detail all construction which is approved as a result of this request for local equivalency. No work to create a communicating opening between buildings shall be done prior to approval of such permit application and issuance of a permit.

Approved by the Building Inspection Commission on September 18, 2002

Originally signed by:
Gary Massetani, Fire Marshal
October 9, 2002

Frank Y. Chiu, Director
October 3, 2002

ATTACHMENT A

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION
City & County of San Francisco
1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, California 94103-2414



**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF LOCAL EQUIVALENCY FOR MODIFICATION
OR ALTERNATE MATERIALS, DESIGN OR METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION**

DATE SUBMITTED _____ [Note: This form shall be recorded as part of the permanent construction records of the property]

If no permit application has been filed, a Preapplication Review Fee is required for review of a request for local equivalency or modification, per SFBC Table 1-B, Item 8. Additional fees may be required by Fire Department and other City review agencies.

If a permit application has been filed, no additional fees are required for this review.

Permit Application # _____

Property Address: _____

Block and Lot: ____/____ Occupancy Group: _____ Type of Construction: _____ No. of Stories: _____

Describe Use of Building _____

Under the authority of the 2007 San Francisco Building Code, Sections 104A.2.7 and 104A.2.8; the 2007 San Francisco Mechanical Code, Section 108.7; the 2007 San Francisco Electrical Code, Section 089.16; and the 2007 San Francisco Plumbing Code, Section 108.7; the undersigned requests modifications of the provisions of these codes and/or approval of alternate materials, designs or methods of construction. Two copies of supporting documents, including plans showing the proposed modifications or alternate materials, design or methods of construction, are attached.

Regular Code Requirement (specify Code and Sections)

Proposed Modification or Alternate

Case-by-Case Basis of Request - Describe the practical difficulties presented in meeting the specific conditions of the code and how the proposed modification or alternate meets the intent of the code. A separate form should be filled for each requested modification or alternate. Attach copies of any Administrative Bulletin, Code Ruling, reference, test reports, expert opinions, etc., which support this request. The Department may require that an approved consultant be hired by the applicant to perform tests or analysis and to submit an evaluation report to the Department for consideration.

Requested by:	PROJECT SPONSOR	ARCHITECT/ENGINEER	
Print Name:	_____	_____	
Signature:	_____	_____	[PROFESSIONAL STAMP HERE]
Telephone:			