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Re: 2003 IBC Update
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He's back...

I find it difficult to believe, but it's been about a year and a half since I sent out one of these thinly disguised marketing efforts. Less difficult to believe is the fact that April 2008 marks the 10th year since my medical leave from being a Building Plans Examiner for Portland's Bureau of Buildings.

So, where have I been for the last year and a half? For most of last year I worked two days a week for the City of Salem. The state of the current economy in Oregon has postponed my need to return. When not working in Salem, I've been continuing to work on the 'odd' projects that come my way, mostly involving Building Code interpretation, often in other states; and the creation of Land Use proposals. I've always been more interested in what the Code allows than I have been in what the Code prohibits. The work of a Plans Examiner involves more of the latter than the former—people who submit plans for review hear more about the deficiencies of the construction drawings than applause for what they've done correctly; it's the nature of the business.

Coinciding with my 10th year as a Code consultant and as an illustrator, I've recently upgraded my website, www.mjarts.com. I've added some new material, useful things that aren't necessarily easy to find:

UL Listed 1-hr Assemblies, Fire Exposure on One Side [OSSC 704.5]; information on Fire Ratings of Exposed Wood; a Building Safety article on Fire Wall structural stability; an Oregon interpretation on Stories with One Exit; and the 2008 Standards for Accessible parking places.

2008 Oregon Residential Specialty Code Amendments

On April 1, 2008, the State adopted three new versions of the residential, electrical and plumbing specialty codes: 1. The 2008 Oregon Residential Specialty Code (ORSC) based on the 2006 International Residential Code; 2. The 2008 Oregon Electrical Specialty Code based on the 2008 National Electrical Code; and 3. The 2008 Oregon Plumbing Specialty Code based on the 2006 Uniform Plumbing Code.

The State has published rules for a Transition Period from April 1, 2008 until June 30, 2008: During the transition period customers may choose to use either the 2008 ORSC or the 2005 ORSC.

Appendix N Low-Rise Multi-Family Dwelling Construction

There are major changes to Appendix N that have come into effect this month.

I used to understand why we had Appendix N: if one did not want to include sprinklers in their apartment designs, they could use Appendix N. However, the omission of sprinklers in apartment buildings has gone away:

AN103.2.2 Automatic sprinkler systems. An automatic sprinkler system shall be provided in **all low-rise multiple-family dwellings** in accordance with Section AN109.

The only residential structures permitted to be non-sprinklered are those defined as Dwellings or Townhouses: detached one- and two-family dwellings, **townhouses, and Rowhouses** three stories or less above grade having an exterior door for each dwelling unit. [R101.2]. A Townhouse being: a single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of three or more attached units in which each unit extends from foundation to roof and with open space on at least two sides. An odd aspect for me is that in the '80's when I was writing Portland's Rowhouse Guidelines, "townhouse" wasn't a Code-defined term, it was the description of a style of apartment-a 2-story apartment unit. Is a "Townhouse" intended to be different than a Rowhouse? I don't think so, but one can never tell.

Is there any reason to use Appendix N instead of the OSSC for apartment buildings not more than, "three stories above grade, 36,000 square feet in cumulative area inclusive of attached carports and garages and 24 dwelling units"[AN103.2.3]? **Perhaps**, found in Section [AN109.2.1]:

3. Common Domestic/Fire Mains. **A single common water supply main shall be permitted to service both the domestic use and fire sprinklers.** Domestic demand shall be included as part of the overall system demand for systems with common domestic/fire mains where no provisions are made to prevent the domestic water flow upon sprinkler system activation.

This provision exists in OSSC [903.3.5.1], but it isn't clear as to when it can be used.

On the other hand, the sprinkler provisions regarding "substantial alterations are made or substantial damage occurs to an existing nonsprinkled Group R building" are now more stringent in the Low-Rise Appendix than in OSSC Chapter 9. The 'percentage of damage' used in the Low-Rise Code was reduced from the number found in [903.2.7.2]. One of the problems of having duplicate Codes... [Marty is editorializing again].

On the subject of editorializing, one of the features I'm considering adding to my website is the 'blue bricks blog' [the reason for the name will be obvious if you go to my website]. If I decide to do it, I will editorialize on some of the really peculiar facets of Code enforcement, such as, 'why did I just spend thousands of dollars on a Building Permit which they now say is in error?'

A last reminder: new ADA "**Wheelchair User Only**" rules have come into effect as of January 1, 2008. Parking lots with 100 or more spaces require "**Wheelchair User Only**" signage.

MJ Arts is a State-licensed Plan Reviewer and Structural Inspector; and is available to assist you with your plan review needs. Marty Jones is a member of the Construction Specifications Institute. **MJ Arts** can provide you with timely plan review and Code interpretation information. For email information, contact:

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Telephone/FAX/e-mail consulting services are available on an hourly, monthly or contract basis for architects, designers and construction professionals. Contact me for more information.

Marty Jones is an ICC-certified and State of Oregon-licensed Plans Examiner and Structural Inspector, with 14 years of experience working for the City of Portland as a Building Plans Examiner.

MJ Arts was created in 1998 to provide the professional construction community with a source of Building Code and architectural information that will enable them to be better-prepared for working with the governmental bodies that enforce regulations pertaining to the construction industry.