

## STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-18-01

May 1, 2001

The following is offered in response to your letter to me dated March 28, 2001 (received in this office April 26, 2001), in which you seek a formal interpretation of the provisions of section 707.0 of the BOCA National Building Code/1996 portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

**Question:** An existing building contains a 10 inch thick masonry unit wall consisting of a 6 inch thick wythe and a 4 inch thick wythe, with a 6 inch wide, wide flange steel beam sitting atop the 6 inch wythe and two layers of 5/8 inch fire rated gypsum board serving as protection to the side of the steel beam not encased in masonry. In addition, a masonry parapet has been constructed above the steel beam which is supporting the roof deck. Can the described wall be considered the equivalent of a fire wall under the current or any previous State Building Code?

**Answer:** The described wall does not meet the requirements for a fire wall under the current building code, or any building code in effect in Connecticut since September 1, 1981. One of the characteristics of a fire wall found in codes in effect in Connecticut since September 1, 1981 that sets fire walls apart from other fire separation assemblies is that they are required to be structurally independent to allow the collapse of construction on either side of the fire wall without collapse of the wall itself. The wall you describe, since it incorporates a structural member supporting construction on both sides of it, does not fulfill this requirement.

However, from September 1, 1971 to August 31, 1981, the State Building Code simply required that fire walls had to have adequate fire resistance and structural strength under fire conditions to subdivide a building or separate adjoining buildings to resist the spread of fire. If the wall in question was constructed prior to September 1, 1981, it is allowed to remain under the provisions of section 102.2, which states in part that the legal occupancy of any structure existing on the date of adoption of this code shall be permitted to continue without change. Any work on the existing wall must of course be performed in a code compliant manner.