

**Oregon**  
**Interpretive Ruling No. 97-8**

**AREAS OF RESCUE ASSISTANCE**

**REQUESTED BY:** Initiated by the Building Codes Division Administrator's Area of Rescue Assistance Task Force.

**REQUEST FOR RULING:** An interpretive ruling is requested to clarify the provisions for and provide an alternate method for areas of rescue assistance in Section 1107.2.1 of the 1996 Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC).

**CODE SECTION:** 1996 OSSC Section 1107, provides specific requirements for areas of rescue assistance.

**BACKGROUND:** In response to an increase in requests for technical assistance on area of rescue assistance provisions in the OSSC, the Building Codes Division Administrator appointed an Area of Rescue Assistance Task Force. The task force is comprised of representatives of fire officials, building officials, design professionals and disabled individuals. The purpose of the task force was to recommend solutions to various questions about area of rescue assistance provisions that are either not uniformly enforced or are not uniformly understood by code enforcement and design professionals,

**DISCUSSION:** The Area of Rescue Assistance Task Force considered this proposed alternate method interpretive ruling and recommends its adoption. This alternate method is intended to serve the industry until code changes are implemented to eliminate the need for this ruling.

The development of provisions for areas of rescue assistance in the OSSC occurred when the state legislature in 1991 directed the state building code to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The OSSC, like the ADA, provides that in new construction, when a required exit or horizontal exit is not accessible, an area of rescue assistance shall be provided.

However, pursuant to OSSC Section 1107.1, areas of rescue assistance are not required in buildings where **BOTH** of the following are provided:

1. An approved supervised automatic fire-extinguishing system is installed in accordance with **either** UBC Standard 9-1, or UBC Standard 9-3; and
2. A written fire- and life-safety emergency plan approved by the building official and fire chief.

Note that UBC Standard 9-3 may only be used for Group R Occupancies of four stories or less.

The City of Portland Fire Prevention Division has developed guidelines for complying with the written emergency plan in their jurisdiction. Other municipalities may consult with Portland in reviewing proposed emergency plans.

Additionally, OSSC Section 1107.2.2, has been construed by some to only require one wheelchair space, and hence only one area of rescue assistance, per story If the occupant load does not exceed 200 persons. However, the code intends that only the number of wheelchair

spaces per area of rescue assistance may be reduced to one. The number of areas of rescue assistance is determined in OSSC Section 1107.1. The exception to Section 1107.2.2 clarifies this code intent.

When the area of rescue assistance provisions were developed for the OSSC, construction requirements were not considered for buildings where open stairways, ramp or escalator are permitted. Therefore, this ruling provides an alternate method for areas of rescue assistance where such enclosures are not required. In such cases, the area of rescue assistance need not be part of or directly connected to the stairway, ramp or escalator. Rather, the area of rescue assistance should be diligently located close to it.

#### **FINDINGS:**

- 1996 Oregon Structural Specialty Code Section 104.2.8, Alternate Materials, Alternate Design and Methods of Construction, allows acceptance of an alternate which achieves the intent of the code and provides equivalent suitability, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, safety, and sanitation for occupants and property.
- This interpretation is authorized by ORS 455.060, Rulings on Acceptability of Materials! Designs or Methods of Construction, and Attorney General's Opinion OP-5208, issued October 1, 1981, which advised the statute permits authoritative interpretations of code requirements.
- This interpretive ruling provides equivalent suitability, strength, effectiveness fire resistance, durability, safety, and sanitation for occupants and property as required in the 1996 OSSC.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The Building Codes Structures Board accepts the recommendation of the Area of Rescue Assistance Task Force, and the findings listed above.

(signed July 9, 1997)

John A Talbott, P.E., Chairman  
Building Codes Structures Board

**RULING:** The recommendations and findings of the Building Codes Structures Board are accepted and the following interpretive ruling that establishes an alternate method for 1996 Oregon Structural Specialty Code Section 1107.2 is adopted.

(signed July 14, 1997)

Joseph A. Brewer III, Administrator

Building Codes Division

## **AREAS OF RESCUE ASSISTANCE ALTERNATE METHOD**

This Alternate Method provides at least the equivalent effectiveness of areas of rescue assistance required in the 1996 Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC) Section 1107.2 by use of an area of rescue assistance installed in accordance with the following requirements:

### **SECTION 1 – GENERAL**

When interior stairways, ramps or escalators are not required to be enclosed in buildings or portions thereof, as specified in OSSC Section 1009.1 Exception 1, an area of rescue assistance using this alternate method shall contain the following:

1. An area or room which is separated from other portions of the building by a smoke barrier.
2. Smoke barriers which have a fire-resistance rating of not less than one hour and which completely enclose the area or room.
3. Doors in the smoke barrier which comply with OSSC Section 1005.8.1.
4. Other openings in the smoke barrier which comply with OSSC Sections 713.10, 713.11, and 1005.8.2.
5. An exit from the area or room that has a direct, obvious and unobstructed means of travel to the stairway, ramp, or escalator. This exit shall be in close relationship to the stairway, ramp or escalator.
6. Identification as required by OSSC Section 1107.2.6 on the outside of the area or room that is visible from the accessible route.
7. All other features required by OSSC Section 1107.2.2 through 1107.2.5, with the clarification that the total number of 30-inch by 48-inch (762 mm by 1219 mm) wheelchair spaces shall not be less than one for each area of rescue assistance.

### **SECTION 2 – OPEN PARKING GARAGES**

When interior stairways, ramps or escalators are not required to be enclosed in open parking garages, as specified in OSSC Section 1009.1 Exception 3, an area of rescue assistance is not required.