

Oregon
Interpretive Ruling No. 93-30
STAIRS AND RAMPS WITHIN YARD
WHERE OPENING PROTECTION IS REQUIRED

Requested By: PPPI MANUAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

QUESTION

May walks in yards where protection of openings is required in exterior walls, be ramped or have two or more steps?

APPLICABLE CODE SECTIONS

1993 Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC). Sections 3301(b), 3305(i), 3306(a), 3306(m) and 3307(f) and Table 5-A.

BACKGROUND

Section 3306(m): Exterior stairways shall not project into yards where openings are not permitted or protection of openings is required.

Section 3307(1): Ramps shall be constructed as required for stairways.

Section 3306(a): Stairway: Two or more risers shall constitute a stairway.

Section 3305(i): Exterior exit balconies shall not be located in areas where openings are not permitted, or where openings are required to be protected due to location on property.

Table 5-A: Under the column, "OPENINGS IN EXTERIOR WALLS", the requirement for protected openings varies from 5 to 20 feet from property lines, depending on the occupancy of the building. Note that 20 feet is the most frequently used.

Reference: SCAB minutes 4/27/79

FINDINGS

The hazard the code concerns itself with in controlling exterior exit stairs is the possible exposure to fire on adjacent property. The basis for acceptable standards of safety is a grade level walk because the definition of an exit, Section 3301(b) includes YARDS. If yards are acceptable, ascending steps from basements and those descending from stoops would not be a risk to fire exposure. Stoops should be allowed to be as high as 48 inches, which would allow dock height buildings such as factories and warehouses built-up to truck bed height to have legal exit steps within yards where protection of openings are required.

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, advising the statute permits authoritative interpretations of existing code requirements.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Walks, ramps and stairs serving as exits can be located in yards where protection of openings is a requirement due to location on property (Table 5-A) provided:

1. They do not serve floors above the ground floor; and
2. No portion of the walking surface shall be located more than four feet above the adjacent natural or finish grade; and

3. For each such exit, at least one additional exit serving the same occupants shall discharge onto a public way without traversing that portion of any yard where protection of openings is a requirement.

Interpretive Ruling 93-30 replaces PPPI-4046.

(signed January 26, 1994)

John Talbot, Chairman
Structural Code Advisory Board

The recommendations and findings of the Structural Code Advisory Board are accepted and the conclusions are adopted.

(signed January 26, 1994)

Gary J. Wicks, Administrator
Building Codes Agency