



Washington State Building Code Council

Improving the built environment by promoting health, safety and welfare

1500 Jefferson Street SE • P.O. Box 41449 • Olympia, Washington 98504
(360) 407-9277 • e-mail sbcc@des.wa.gov • www.sbcc.wa.gov

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. 18-01

CODE: 2015 International Building Code

SECTION: 503.1, General building heights and area limitations

QUESTION: The Washington State Amendment to Section 503.1 added language to the model code that appears to clarify that fire walls may be used to create separate buildings for certain purposes. In the revised language, “height limitations” is listed as a purpose, but not number of stories.

May a fire wall be used to separate portions of a single building into separate buildings for the purpose of determining allowable number of stories?

ANSWER: Yes.

Per the explanation in the amendment application for IBC Sections 503.1 and 706.1, ‘maximum number of stories’ is clearly referenced; “This code change clarifies that each portion of a building separated by fire walls complying with Section 706 is considered to be a separate building but only for purposes of determining the maximum allowable area, maximum number of stories or height and to separate buildings of different types of construction. Taken literally, the first sentence in Section 706.1 potentially creates the need for separate egress systems as well as separate mechanical, electrical, sprinkler, fire alarm, smoke control and plumbing systems.”

SUPERSEDES: None

REQUESTED BY: City of Bellingham