

## STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. 13-Sept05

**CODE:** 2012 International Residential Code

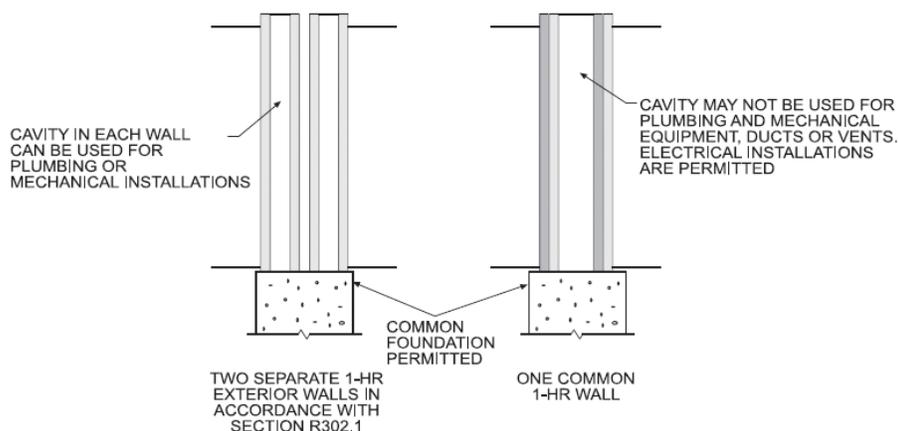
**SECTION:** R302.2 Townhouses

**QUESTION:** The IRC Section R302.2 states:  
Each *townhouse* shall be considered a separate building and shall be separated by fire-resistance rated wall assemblies meeting the requirements of Section R302.1 for exterior walls.

**Exception:** A common 1-hour fire-resistance-rated wall assembly tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263 is permitted for townhouses if such walls do not contain plumbing or mechanical equipment, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall. The wall shall be rated for fire exposure from both sides and shall extend to and be tight against exterior walls and the underside of the roof sheathing. Electrical installations shall be installed in accordance with Chapters 34 through 43. Penetrations of electrical outlet boxes shall be in accordance with Section R302.4.

Code commentary published by ICC states:

Because of the difficulties involved in construction and the potential for unnecessary duplication, the exception offers an alternative to the two separate 1-hour walls by permitting the construction of a shared or “common” 2-hour-rated wall between the townhouses. See Commentary Figure R302.2 for an illustration of the two separate 1-hour walls and the common 2-hour wall.



**Figure R302.2**  
**DWELLING UNIT SEPARATION FOR TOWNHOUSES**

- 1) Is there a typo in the code language? Should the reference in the exception be to a 2-HR wall as stated in the commentary and apparently shown in figure R302.2?
- 2) Is it the intent of the code that a single 1-hour fire-resistance-rated common wall be allowed to separate non-sprinklered townhouses?

**ANSWER:** 1) The reference to a 2-hour wall in the commentary is incorrect, there is not an error in the IRC code language. The rating of the wall is in accordance with either Table R302.1(1) for townhouses without fire sprinkler protection, or Table R302.1(2) for townhouses with fire sprinkler protection. The exception allows a common wall. The current code does not require a 2-hour rated wall.

**2012 IRC Provisions\***

<u>Townhouse Wall Construction</u>	<u>Fire Sprinklers</u>	<u>Non-Sprinklered</u>
Common Wall No plumbing or mechanical, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall	1 hour Both sides	1 hour Both sides
Two separate walls	1 hour outside ONLY	1 hour Both sides

**\*Note:** This table is for informational purposes only and does not appear in the 2012 IRC or in the state amendments to the IRC.

**2) Yes, non-sprinklered townhouses are allowed to be separated by a single common wall with a 1- hour fire-resistance-rated wall. The wall must be rated from both sides and contain no plumbing or mechanical equipment or ducts or vents.**

**SUPERSEDES:** None

**REQUESTED BY:** Pierce County, Bellingham