

**INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL (ICC)
Code Technology Committee (CTC)**

**Area of Study – Balanced Fire Protection
Code Issue – Smoke and Heat Vents**

**October 19, 2006
Draft Interim Report No. 1 of CTC Recommendations and
Public Hearing Announcement**

In accordance with ICC Council Policy No. 5, the CTC held meetings to evaluate the ICC Board-approved area of study entitled Balanced Fire Protection. Specifically, in accordance with the July 25, 2005 Work Plan (see below), the CTC held meetings to evaluate a specific code subject – Smoke and Heat Vents. The CTC will hold a public hearing on October 19, 2006 at the Hilton Kansas City Airport [(816) 891-8900] to allow interested and affected parties to comment on the CTC interim recommendations. It should be noted that, as an interim report, this does not complete this area of study. Other aspects of this area of study are still under investigation.

Area of Study:

BALANCED FIRE PROTECTION. The study of balanced fire protection includes an assessment of the appropriate amount of active (ie fire sprinkler) versus passive (ie rated compartments) requirements to be required by the code. In this regard, many proposals have been considered in past cycles to revise the height and area provisions as well as the level of fire sprinkler trade-offs. The scope of this activity would be an investigation of the requirements in the code and the establishment of a clearly defined scope of work for the CTC to consider. Depending on the scope of work, the effort may result in a long term activity.

Work Plan:

The following are the steps established by the CTC to address this area of study:

1. Completion of a comparative matrix by interested parties for the subject matter to be considered. (Optional)
2. Approval of the comparative matrix by CTC. (Optional)
3. Identification of specific subjects by interested parties for CTC to review.
4. For the specific subjects identified, further identification and submission of supporting documents by interested parties. This includes the potential methodology, such as a consequence analysis approach, to evaluate the issue.
5. CTC meeting(s) to discuss. The by-product of the evaluation of an issue may be the development of a methodology to evaluate future issues.
6. CTC issues findings in a report.
7. Public hearing on the report.
8. Report finalized and submitted to the ICC CEO in accordance with CTC procedures. This includes a determination as to whether CTC will submit code changes to the applicable International Code through the ICC Code Development Process.

Balanced Fire Protection: Code Issue – Smoke and Heat Vents

Recommendation:

The CTC is soliciting input on whether or not the code should require smoke and heat vents.

Considerations:

- Purpose: Impact on occupant evacuation and tenability of building environment relative to fire fighting activities.
- Smoke and heat vents are based on 1950's technology.
- The science of fire protection has evolved considerably, particularly major advances in automatic sprinkler protection.
- Questionable benefits as determined by various test reports dating back to the 1970's.
- Cost/benefit of smoke and heat vents has not been demonstrated
- Impact on building envelope, e.g. security and weather protection
- Lack of contemporary testing supporting viability

The following are the smoke and heat vent provisions in the 2006 IBC and IFC:

SECTION 910 SMOKE AND HEAT VENTS

910.1 General. Where required by this code or otherwise installed, smoke and heat vents or mechanical smoke exhaust systems and draft curtains shall conform to the requirements of this section.

Exceptions:

1. Frozen food warehouses used solely for storage of Class I and II commodities where protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system.
2. Where areas of buildings are equipped with early suppression fast-response (ESFR) sprinklers, automatic smoke and heat vents shall not be required within these areas.

910.2 Where required. Smoke and heat vents shall be installed in the roofs of one-story buildings or portions thereof occupied for the uses set forth in Sections 910.2.1 through 910.2.3.

910.2.1 Group F-1 or S-1. Buildings and portions thereof used as a Group F-1 or S-1 occupancy having more than 50,000 square feet (4645 m²) of undivided area.

Exception: Group S-1 aircraft repair hangars.

910.2.2 High-piled combustible storage. Buildings and portions thereof containing high-piled combustible stock or rack storage in any occupancy group when required by Section 2306.7.

910.2.3 Exit access travel distance increase. Buildings and portions thereof used as a Group F-1 or S-1 occupancy where the maximum exit access travel distance is increased in accordance with Section 1016.2.

910.3 Design and installation. The design and installation of smoke and heat vents and draft curtains shall be as specified in Sections 910.3.1 through 910.3.5.2 and Table 910.3.

910.3.1 Design. Smoke and heat vents shall be listed and labeled to indicate compliance with UL 793.

910.3.2 Vent operation. Smoke and heat vents shall be capable of being operated by approved automatic and manual means. Automatic operation of smoke and heat vents shall conform to the provisions of Sections 910.3.2.1 through 910.3.2.3.

910.3.2.1 Gravity-operated drop out vents. Automatic smoke and heat vents containing heat-sensitive glazing designed to shrink and drop out of the vent opening when exposed to fire shall fully open within 5 minutes after the vent cavity is exposed to a simulated fire represented by a time-temperature gradient that reaches an air temperature of 500°F (260°C) within 5 minutes.

910.3.2.2 Sprinklered buildings. Where installed in buildings equipped with an approved automatic sprinkler system, smoke and heat vents shall be designed to operate automatically.

910.3.2.3 Nonsprinklered buildings. Where installed in buildings not equipped with an approved automatic sprinkler system, smoke and heat vents shall operate automatically by actuation of a heat-responsive device rated at between 100°F (56°C) and 220°F (122°C) above ambient.

Exception: Gravity-operated drop out vents complying with Section 910.3.2.1.

910.3.3 Vent dimensions. The effective venting area shall not be less than 16 square feet (1.5 m²) with no dimension less than 4 feet (1219 mm), excluding ribs or gutters having a total width not exceeding 6 inches (152 mm).

910.3.4 Vent locations. Smoke and heat vents shall be located 20 feet (6096 mm) or more from adjacent lot lines and fire walls and 10 feet (3048 mm) or more from fire barrier walls. Vents shall be uniformly located within the roof area above high-piled storage areas, with consideration given to roof pitch, draft curtain location, sprinkler location and structural members.

**TABLE 910.3
REQUIREMENTS FOR DRAFT CURTAINS AND SMOKE AND HEAT VENTS^a**

OCCUPANCY GROUP AND COMMODITY CLASSIFICATION	DESIGNATED STORAGE HEIGHT (feet)	MINIMUM DRAFT CURTAIN DEPTH (feet)	MAXIMUM AREA FORMED BY DRAFT CURTAINS (square feet)	VENT-AREA-TO FLOOR-AREA RATIO ^c	MAXIMUM SPACING OF VENT CENTERS (feet)	MAXIMUM DISTANCE TO VENTS FROM WALL OR DRAFT CURTAIN ^b (feet)
Group F-1 and S-1	—	$0.2 \times H_d$ but ≥ 4	50,000	1:100	120	60
High-piled storage (see Section 910.2.3) I-IV (Option 1)	≤ 20	6	10,000	1:100	100	60
	$> 20 \leq 40$	6	8,000	1:75	100	55
High-piled storage (see Section 910.2.3) I-IV (Option 2)	≤ 20	4	3,000	1:75	100	55
	$> 20 \leq 40$	4	3,000	1:50	100	50
High-piled storage (see Section 910.2.3) High hazard (Option 1)	≤ 20	6	6,000	1:50	100	50
	$> 20 \leq 30$	6	6,000	1:40	90	45
High-piled storage (see Section 910.2.3) High hazard (Option 2)	≤ 20	4	4,000	1:50	100	50
	$> 20 \leq 30$	4	2,000	1:30	75	40

For SI: 1 foot = 304.8 mm, 1 square foot = 0.0929 m².

a. Requirements for rack storage heights in excess of those indicated shall be in accordance with Chapter 23. For solid-piled storage heights in excess of those indicated, an approved engineered design shall be used.

b. The distance specified is the maximum distance from any vent in a particular draft curtained area to walls or draft curtains which form the perimeter of the draft curtained area.

c. Where draft curtains are not required, the vent area to floor area ratio shall be calculated based on a minimum draft curtain depth of 6 feet (Option 1).

d. "H" is the height of the vent, in feet, above the floor.

910.3.5 Draft curtains. Where required, draft curtains shall be provided in accordance with this section.

Exception: Where areas of buildings are equipped with ESFR sprinklers, draft curtains shall not be provided within these areas. Draft curtains shall only be provided at the separation between the ESFR sprinklers and the conventional sprinklers.

910.3.5.1 Construction. Draft curtains shall be constructed of sheet metal, lath and plaster, gypsum board or other approved materials that provide equivalent performance to resist the passage of smoke. Joints and connections shall be smoke tight.

910.3.5.2 Location and depth. The location and minimum depth of draft curtains shall be in accordance with Table 910.3.

910.4 Mechanical smoke exhaust. Where approved by the fire code official, engineered mechanical smoke exhaust shall be an acceptable alternative to smoke and heat vents.

910.4.1 Location. Exhaust fans shall be uniformly spaced within each draft-curtained area and the maximum distance between fans shall not be greater than 100 feet (30 480 mm).

910.4.2 Size. Fans shall have a maximum individual capacity of 30,000 cfm (14.2 m³/s). The aggregate capacity of smoke exhaust fans shall be determined by the equation:

$C=A \times 300$ (**Equation 9-10**)

where:

C = Capacity of mechanical ventilation required, in cubic feet per minute (m³/s).

A = Area of roof vents provided in square feet (m²) in accordance with Table 910.3.

910.4.3 Operation. Mechanical smoke exhaust fans shall be automatically activated by the automatic sprinkler system or by heat detectors having operating characteristics equivalent to those described in Section 910.3.2. Individual manual controls for each fan unit shall also be provided.

910.4.4 Wiring and control. Wiring for operation and control of smoke exhaust fans shall be connected ahead of the main disconnect and protected against exposure to temperatures in excess of 1,000°F (538°C) for a period of not less than 15 minutes. Controls shall be located so as to be immediately accessible to the fire service from the exterior of the building and protected against interior fire exposure by fire barriers having a fire-resistance rating not less than 1 hour.

910.4.5 Supply air. Supply air for exhaust fans shall be provided at or near the floor level and shall be sized to provide a minimum of 50 percent of required exhaust. Openings for supply air shall be uniformly distributed around the periphery of the area served.

910.4.6 Interlocks. On combination comfort air-handling/smoke removal systems or independent comfort air-handling systems, fans shall be controlled to shut down in accordance with the approved smoke control sequence.