



# Exterior Wall Openings

Interpretations of State and Local Building Codes  
2007 California Building Code:  
Section 602 and Section 704



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Single Family Dwellings - Requirements for exterior walls, projections, and window openings within 5 feet of the fire separation distance.

**2007 California Building Code (CBC) Sections:**

- Exterior Wall Fire Resistance Rating - Sections 602.1, Table 602, and Section 704.5
- Exterior Wall Projections - Section 704.2
- Exterior Wall Openings - Section 704.8 and Table 704.8

**Definitions:**

Fire Separation Distance - The distance measured at right angles from the face of the wall to one of the following:

1. The closest interior lot line;
2. To the centerline of a street, an alley or public way; or
3. To an imaginary line between two building on the property.

**Exterior Wall Fire Resistance Rating Requirements:**

CBC Section 602.1 and Table 602 (footnote f) requires that the exterior walls for single family dwellings and accessory to Group R-3 shall have a fire separation distance of at least 5 feet unless constructed of 1 hour fire-rated construction. CBC Section 704.5 requires that the fire-resistance rating of the exterior wall with a fire separation distance of 5 feet or less be rated for exposure to fire from both sides.

**Projection Requirements:**

CBC Section 704.2 requires that projections, including cornices, eave overhangs, exterior balconies, and similar projections, shall not extend beyond the distance determined by the following two methods, whichever results in the lesser projection:

1. A point one-third the distance to the lot line from an assumed vertical plane located where protected openings are required in accordance with Section 704.8.
2. More than 12 inches into areas where openings are prohibited.

**Wall Opening Requirements:**

CBC Sections 704.8, Table 704.8, and 406.1.2 requires that the maximum area of exterior wall openings is shown in the table below for single family dwellings and accessory buildings to Group R-3:

Fire Separation Distance	Unprotected and Protected Openings	Fire Resistance Rating	Minimum Projection Distance from Property Line (ft)
0 to 3 feet	Not Permitted	1-hour, both sides	2
Greater than 3 to 5 feet	25%	1-hour, both sides	2
Greater than 5 feet	Unlimited	Non-rated	2