

Tuesday, June 09, 2009

Memo to: Fabiano @ Pulte Homes

Re: Rated separation between "screen rooms" behind Attached Single Family dwellings.

The code speaks to Two-Family dwellings and Townhouses specifically, but does not speak to Single Family Attached dwellings specifically. This leaves us with Single Family dwellings which are attached in your case by a wall over a demising property line.

Since your configuration is located on two separate lots, these Single Family Attached dwellings are required by **Table R302.1** to be separated by a one-hour wall from each side of the property line, therefore creating a one-hour wall situation similar to the Two-Family dwelling which allows only a one hour separation. Under the terminology defining these types of dwellings, Town Houses and Two Family Dwellings, the defining element is ownership of the underlying property, Townhouse property being owned separately for each unit and Two Family Dwellings being owned by one property owner. The Single Family-Attached dwellings are on separately owned properties similar to the Townhouse.

Fire separation for Single Family dwellings require one hour walls from the perspective of each individual dwelling, thus resulting in a one hour separation when joined in the demising wall at the property line. Here, the Townhouse with a two-hour separation requirement clearly specifies in **R317.2.1 Continuity** that "the fire resistance rating shall extend the full length of the wall or assembly, including wall extensions through and separating attached enclosed accessory structures." I interpret that "enclosed" would mean any attached accessory structure enclosed by any wall, whether solid, or screened.

Your attached single family dwellings are NOT Townhouses as defined under the code, simply due to the fact of there being two, rather than three dwellings connected. The code writers do not speak to Single Family Attached dwellings of less than three units. Those same code writers are silent as to the extension of enclosed accessory structures, both for the Two-Family dwellings and for the Single Family dwellings.

Section R302 Exterior Wall Location speaks directly to this situation, requiring compliance with **Table R302.1** wherein a non-fire rated wall element parallel to the property line must be located 3 feet away from a property line and wall elements inside that 3 foot area along a property line must be 1 hour rated from each side, again a one-hour wall construction. Thus your wall elements as an element of an accessory structure being a projection from the building along the property line must be one hour rated to the underside of the roof. They would be required to be rated if they are located anywhere within 3 feet of that property line. A fence or open wall would not.

James I. Akins, Jr., CBO
Building Official