



Town of Clover
Development Services
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CODE INTERPRETATION

QUESTION

Does a pull down attic stair or wood covered scuttle hole installed in the ceiling of an attached garage meet the requirements for maintaining a fire separation between the garage and the house?

CODE REFERENCE:

2006 International Residential Code: Section R309.2

ANSWER

No. Attic access openings in garage ceilings are required to maintain a fire separation using 1/2-inch gypsum board. There is no exception provided in the code for use of fire-retardant treated wood.

Note:

1. As permitted by the Code, no ceiling whatsoever is required when the sheetrock separation on the wall between house and garage extends all the way to the roof deck. Therefore, if a 1/2-inch gypsum board wall from the floor to the roof exists, a stair or wood covered scuttle hole would be acceptable. The sheetrock must be taped and sealed at the joints.
2. A "fire-retardant" treated attic stair's plywood is not equivalent to 1/2-inch gypsum board as prescribed by Section R309.2. This opinion is based on specific provisions found in the IBC. The IBC has a specific material test for building materials required by the code to be noncombustible (ASTM E 136, Section 703.4.1 of the '06 IBC). Subsection 703.4.2 further recognizes that gypsum board qualifies as a permissible noncombustible material by allowing the gypsum board facing, with certain surface burning characteristic code limitations. However, fire-retardant-treated wood is not afforded this same noncombustibility recognition by the IBC. Therefore, based on these IBC code provisions, fire-retardant-treated plywood is not comparable to 1/2-inch gypsum board. As such, further information, such as a test/research report, must be provided to substantiate its equivalence.
3. All permitted attic openings shall be trimmed out with 2x material. (No thin profile door or window trim/casings would hold in place during a fire event.)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Hunter Bank Jr.".

Building Official / Town of Clover

Date: July 9, 2012