

# 2021 Virginia Construction Code

## CHAPTER 7 FIRE AND SMOKE PROTECTION FEATURES

### SECTION 708 FIRE PARTITIONS

#### 708.1 General.

The following wall assemblies shall comply with this section:

1. Separation walls as required by [Section 420.2](#) for Group I-1 and Group R occupancies.
2. Walls separating tenant spaces in *covered and open mall buildings* as required by [Section 402.4.2.1](#).
3. *Corridor* walls as required by [Section 1020.3](#).
4. Enclosed elevator lobby separation as required by [Section 3006.3](#).
5. Egress balconies as required by [Section 1021.2](#).
6. Walls separating *ambulatory care facilities* from adjacent spaces, *corridors* or tenant as required by [Section 422.2](#).
7. Walls separating *dwelling and sleeping units* in Groups R-1 and R-2 in accordance with [Sections 907.2.8.1 and 907.2.9.1](#).
8. Vestibules in accordance with [Section 1028.2](#).

#### 708.2 Materials.

The walls shall be of materials permitted by the building type of construction.

#### 708.3 Fire-resistance rating.

*Fire partitions* shall have a *fire-resistance rating* of not less than 1 hour.

##### Exceptions:

1. *Corridor* walls permitted to have a  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -hour *fire-resistance rating* by [Table 1020.2](#).
2. *Dwelling unit* and *sleeping unit* separations in buildings of Types IIB, IIIB and VB construction shall have *fire-resistance ratings* of not less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour in buildings equipped throughout with an *automatic sprinkler system* in accordance with [Section 903.3.1.1](#).

#### 708.4 Continuity.

*Fire partitions* shall extend from the top of the foundation or floor/ceiling assembly below and be securely attached to one of the following:

1. The underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above.
2. The underside of a floor/ceiling or roof/ceiling assembly having a *fire-resistance rating* that is not less than the *fire-resistance rating* of the *fire partition*.

##### Exceptions:

1. *Fire partitions* shall not be required to extend into a crawl space below where the floor above the crawl space has a minimum 1-hour *fire-resistance rating*.
2. *Fire partitions* serving as a *corridor* wall shall not be required to extend above the lower membrane of a *corridor* ceiling provided that the *corridor* ceiling membrane is equivalent to *corridor* wall membrane, and either of the following conditions is met:
  - 2.1. The room-side membrane of the *corridor* wall extends to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab of a fire-resistance-rated floor or roof above.
  - 2.2. The building is equipped with an *automatic sprinkler system* installed throughout in accordance with [Section 903.3.1.1](#) or [903.3.1.2](#), including *automatic* sprinklers installed in the space between the top of the *fire partition* and underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above.
3. *Fire partitions* serving as a *corridor* wall shall be permitted to terminate at the upper membrane of the *corridor* ceiling assembly where the *corridor* ceiling is constructed as required for the *corridor* wall.
4. *Fire partitions* separating tenant spaces in a *covered or open mall building* complying with [Section 402.4.2.1](#) shall not be required to extend above the underside of a ceiling. Such ceiling shall not be required to be part of a fire-resistance-rated assembly, and the *attic* or space above the ceiling at tenant separation walls shall not be required to be subdivided by *fire partitions*.

#### 708.4.1 Supporting construction.

The supporting construction for a *fire partition* shall have a *fire-resistance rating* that is equal to or greater than the required *fire-resistance rating* of the supported *fire partition*.

**Exception:** In buildings of Types IIB, IIIB and VB construction, the supporting construction requirement shall not apply

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to fire partitions separating tenant spaces in covered and open mall buildings, fire partitions separating dwelling units, fire partitions separating sleeping units, fire partitions serving as corridor walls, fire partitions separating ambulatory care facilities from adjacent spaces or corridors, fire partitions separating dwelling and sleeping units from Group R-1 and R-2 occupancies and fire partitions separating vestibules from the level of exit discharge.

#### **708.4.2 Fireblocks and draftstops in combustibile construction.**

In combustibile construction where fire partitions do not extend to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above, the space above and along the line of the fire partition shall be provided with one of the following:

1. Fireblocking up to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above using materials complying with [Section 718.2.1](#).
2. Draftstopping up to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above using materials complying with [Section 718.3.1](#) for floors or [Section 718.4.1](#) for attics.

#### **Exceptions:**

1. Buildings equipped with an automatic sprinkler system installed throughout in accordance with [Section 903.3.1.1](#), or in accordance with [Section 903.3.1.2](#) provided that protection is provided in the space between the top of the fire partition and underside of the floor or roof sheathing, deck or slab above as required for systems complying with [Section 903.3.1.1](#).
2. Where corridor walls provide a sleeping unit or dwelling unit separation, draftstopping shall only be required above one of the corridor walls.
3. In Group R-2 occupancies with fewer than four dwelling units, fireblocking and draftstopping shall not be required.
4. In Group R-2 occupancies up to and including four stories in height in buildings not exceeding 60 feet (18 288 mm) in height above grade plane, the attic space shall be subdivided by draftstops into areas not exceeding 3,000 square feet (279 m<sup>2</sup>) or above every two dwelling units, whichever is smaller.
5. In Group R-3 occupancies with fewer than three dwelling units, fireblocking and draftstopping shall not be required in floor assemblies.

#### **708.5 Exterior walls.**

Where exterior walls serve as a part of a required fire-resistance-rated separation, such walls shall comply with the requirements of [Section 705](#) for exterior walls, and the fire-resistance-rated separation requirements shall not apply.

**Exception:** Exterior walls required to be fire-resistance rated in accordance with [Section 1021.2](#) for exterior egress balconies, [Section 1023.7](#) for interior exit stairways and ramps and [Section 1027.6](#) for exterior exit stairways and ramps.

#### **708.6 Openings.**

Openings in a fire partition shall be protected in accordance with [Section 716](#).

#### **708.7 Penetrations.**

Penetrations of fire partitions shall comply with [Section 714](#).

#### **708.8 Joints.**

Joints made in or between fire partitions shall comply with [Section 715](#).

#### **708.9 Ducts and air transfer openings.**

Penetrations in a fire partition by ducts and air transfer openings shall comply with [Section 717](#).