

## CHAPTER 31

# SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION

### User notes:

**About this chapter:** Chapter 31 provides regulations for unique buildings and building elements. Those include buildings such as membrane structures, greenhouses and relocatable buildings. Special elements include pedestrian walkways and tunnels, awnings, canopies and marquees, vehicular gates and solar energy systems.

**Code development reminder:** Code change proposals to sections preceded by the designation [BS] will be considered by the IBC—Structural Code Development Committee during the 2019 (Group B) Code Development Cycle. See explanation on page iv.

### SECTION 3101 GENERAL

**3101.1 Scope.** The provisions of this chapter shall govern special building construction including membrane structures, temporary structures, *pedestrian walkways* and tunnels, automatic *vehicular gates*, *awnings* and *canopies*, *marquees*, signs, towers, antennas, relocatable buildings, swimming pool enclosures and safety devices, and solar energy systems.

### SECTION 3102 MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

**3102.1 General.** The provisions of Sections 3102.1 through 3102.8 shall apply to air-supported, air-inflated, membrane-covered cable, membrane-covered frame and *tensile membrane structures*, collectively known as membrane structures, erected for a period of 180 days or longer. Those erected for a shorter period of time shall comply with the *International Fire Code*. Membrane structures covering water storage facilities, water clarifiers, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, greenhouses and similar facilities not used for human occupancy are required to meet only the requirements of Sections 3102.3.1 and 3102.7. Membrane structures erected on a building, balcony, deck or other structure for any period of time shall comply with this section.

**3102.2 Tensile membrane structures and air-supported structures.** Tensile membrane structures and air-supported structures, including permanent and temporary structures, shall be designed and constructed in accordance with ASCE 55. The provisions in Sections 3102.3 through 3102.6 shall apply.

**3102.3 Type of construction.** Noncombustible membrane structures shall be classified as Type IIB construction. Noncombustible frame or cable-supported structures covered by an approved membrane in accordance with Section 3102.3.1 shall be classified as Type IIB construction. Heavy timber frame-supported structures covered by an *approved* membrane in accordance with Section 3102.3.1 shall be classified as Type IV construction. Other membrane structures shall be classified as Type V construction.

**Exception:** Plastic less than 30 feet (9144 mm) above any floor used in greenhouses, where occupancy by the general public is not authorized, and for aquaculture pond covers is not required to meet the fire propagation perfor-

mance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701.

**3102.3.1 Membrane and interior liner material.** Membranes and interior liners shall be either noncombustible as set forth in Section 703.5 or meet the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701 and the manufacturer's test protocol.

**Exception:** Plastic less than 20 mil (0.5 mm) in thickness used in greenhouses, where occupancy by the general public is not authorized, and for aquaculture pond covers is not required to meet the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701.

**3102.4 Allowable floor areas.** The area of a membrane structure shall not exceed the limitations specified in Section 506.

**3102.5 Maximum height.** Membrane structures shall not exceed one story nor shall such structures exceed the height limitations in feet specified in Section 504.3.

**Exception:** Noncombustible membrane structures serving as roofs only.

**3102.6 Mixed construction.** Membrane structures shall be permitted to be utilized as specified in this section as a portion of buildings of other types of construction. Height and area limits shall be as specified for the type of construction and occupancy of the building.

**3102.6.1 Noncombustible membrane.** A noncombustible membrane shall be permitted for use as the roof or as a skylight of any building or atrium of a building of any type of construction provided that the membrane is not less than 20 feet (6096 mm) above any floor, balcony or gallery.

**3102.6.1.1 Membrane.** A membrane meeting the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701 shall be permitted to be used as the roof or as a skylight on buildings of Type IIB, III, IV and V construction, provided that the membrane is not less than 20 feet (6096 mm) above any floor, balcony or gallery.

**3102.7 Engineering design.** The structure shall be designed and constructed to sustain dead loads; loads due to tension or