

PDHonline Course G125 (1 PDH)

Understanding Firewall Basics

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2013

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antilever walls.	d the steel framing on each side of the
	Table 1
<u>Recommended Clearance Be</u>	etween Structural Steel and Firewall
Length of Bay Perpendicular to the Firewall	Minimum Clearance Between Wall and Steel
20'-0"	2½ inches
25'-0"	3¼ inches
30'-0"	3¾ inches
35'-0"	4½ inches
40'-0"	5 inches
45'-0"	5¾ inches
50'-0"	6¼ inches
55'-0"	7 inches
60'-0" or greater	7½ inches

(FM) requirements for MFL (Maximum Foreseeable Loss) firewalls.

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Tied Firewalls:

This type of firewall consists of masonry or other rated construction materials that either encases or is tied to the structural framing (see Figure 8A & 8B). These types of walls are integral with and therefore supported by the structural framework. To assure the stability of the wall, the adjacent structural framing on either side of the wall must be designed to resist the forces caused by the structure collapsing on the oppos

















Double One-Way Firewalls:

This type of wall includes two one-way rated firewalls (see Figure 11), which have exposed structural framing on one side. The one-way walls are placed back-to-back, with a minimum separation between them. Each wall must have a minimum fire resistance rating of 3-hours. Double firewalls are most commonly built when a firewall is required to separate an existing structure from a new building. In such a situation it is possible to upgrade a wall secured to an existing building frame to the required fire-resistance rating. This is accomplished by constructing a new rated firewall next to it and securing it to the new building frame. If a fire destroys one wall, the wall supported by the other side should remain standing.

















Fire partitions subdivide areas within a building and can be attached to and supported by adjacent structural members. Fire partitions extend to the ceiling only and are constructed of less fire-resistive materials than fire barriers. However, they too must be built according to specifications certified by nationally recognized testing laboratories. The terms barrier and partition are generally used interchangeably in the industry. However, there is a difference between the two structures. Fire partitions typically only have a 1 to 2-hour fire-resistance rating. In all other respects, they are similar to fire barriers.



Protection at Openings:

The biggest cause of firewall failure is unprotected or improperly protected openings at doorways, conveyors and other similar penetrations. These types of openings in firewalls have resulted in the spread of some of the most destructive industrial fires in history. To maintain the integrity of a wall and to keep fires from spreading, the number and size of openings in a firewall should be minimized. In general, openings should not constitute more than 25% of the area of any firewall and should be constructed with the proper protection.



Source: NIST

<text><image><text>









Closing Mechanisms:

Fire doors are arranged to close automatically via links with certain devices. The most common such device is the heat-sensitive fusible link. A fusible link is installed over a door opening and at the ceiling on both sides of the wall. When activated, the link releases a latch, which in turn releases the door or the counterweights that trigger the operation of the door. Another device is the fire detector. Fire detectors are located on each side of the wall, either over the opening or at the ceiling. When activated the detector releases the door or a set of weights that triggers the operation of the door. A third device is a fire-suppression system. This can be a sprinkler system, water-flow alarm, carbon dioxide system or foam system. When the system is activated, it automatically releases the fire door.



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Ducts should be made of noncombustible materials and be constructed with automatically activated fire dampers where they pass through the firewall or fire barrier. A fire damper is a mechanism, placed in a duct that closes off the duct when the temperature reaches a certain level. Improperly designed ducts can cause problems. For example, during a fire, the structure can collapse, exerting pressure on a duct. If the duct is not designed to break free from the firewall, it can exert excessive pressure on the wall, enlarging the penetration and thereby allowing the fire to breach the wall. To avoid this scenario ducts, piping conduits and cable trays if possible should be installed around a wall.

If any of these types of components must pass through the wall, the penetration should be installed as near to the floor as possible and preferably as near as possible to other intersecting walls. Components passing through a wall more than 3'-0" above the floor should be designed to break away during a fire. Slip joints can be installed to allow ducts and cable trays to detach from the wall. A slip joint is a plastic sleeve that fits into an opening in a wall that in turn allows the two ends of the duct or cable tray to abut inside the sleeve.

Per IBC Section 713.3.1 holes in concrete or masonry walls may be 6-inches in diameter and the area of the opening should not exceed 144 square inches. In addition, concrete, grout or other fire resistant material can be used to fill the annular space for the entire thickness of the wall, or as required to maintain the minimum fire resistance rating of the wall.



Summary:

There are four types of walls that help mitigate the spread of fires and protect building occupants. These walls include firewalls, standard firewalls, fire barriers and fire partitions. A standard firewall must provide a minimum fire resistance rating of 4-hours. A firewall must provide a minimum fire resistance rating of either 3 or 4-hours. Fire barriers and fire partitions provide a minimum of 2 to 3-hours and 1 to 2-hours of fire resistance rating, respectively.

Type of Constructio n	Rating	Configuration
Standard Firewall	4-hour minimum with no openings.	Parapet extends above the roof with wing walls, end walls or extensions.
Firewall	3 to 4-hour with protected openings.	Parapet extends above the roof with wing walls, end walls or extensions.
Fire Barrier	2 to 3-hour with protected openings.	Wall extends from floor to beneath roof or floor deck above.
Fire Partition	1 to 2-hour with protected openings.	Wall extends from floor to ceiling.

resistance rating as the wall in which they are located. Wall penetrations likewise must also provide a fire rating equal to or greater than the effected wall. Closing mechanisms for both protected wall openings and penetrations must be carefully scrutinized in order to insure the proper functioning of the equipment intended to prevent the breach of the firewall at the opening or penetration.

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