
STORY ABOVE GRADE PLANE. Throughout the code, the number of qualifying stories in a building is a contributing factor to the proper application of the provisions. As an example, a building's allowable types of construction are based partly on the limits in story height placed on various occupancy groups. In this case, the code is limiting construction type based on the number of stories above grade plane. The code defines a story above grade plane as any story having its finished floor surface entirely above grade plane. However, floor levels partially below the grade at the building's exterior may also fall under this terminology. The critical part of the definition involves whether or not a floor level located partially below grade is to be considered a story above grade plane. There are two criteria that are important to the determination if a given floor level is to be considered a story above grade plane:

If the finished floor level above the level under consideration is more than 6 feet (1829 mm) above the grade plane as defined in Section 502.1, the level under consideration is a story above grade plane, or

If the finished floor level above the level under consideration is more than 12 feet (3658 mm) above the finished ground level at any point, the floor level under consideration shall be considered a story above grade plane.

Where either one of these two conditions exists, the level under consideration is to be considered a story above grade plane.

Conversely, if the finished floor level above the level under consideration is 6 feet (1829 mm) or less above the grade plane, and does not exceed 12 feet (3658 mm) at any point, the floor level under consideration is not considered a story above grade plane. By definition, it is regulated as a basement. Figures 202-20 and 202-21 illustrate the definitions of "Story," "Basement," and "Story above grade plane."

Although the criteria for establishing the first story above grade plane in Item 2 indicates that such a condition occurs where the 12-foot (3658-mm) limitation is exceeded, the application of this provision is not that simple. It is not the intent of the code to classify a story that is completely below grade except for a small entrance ramp or loading dock as a *story above grade plane*, provided there is no adverse effect on fire department access and staging. An analysis of the impact of such limited elevation differences is necessary to more appropriately apply the code's intended result.

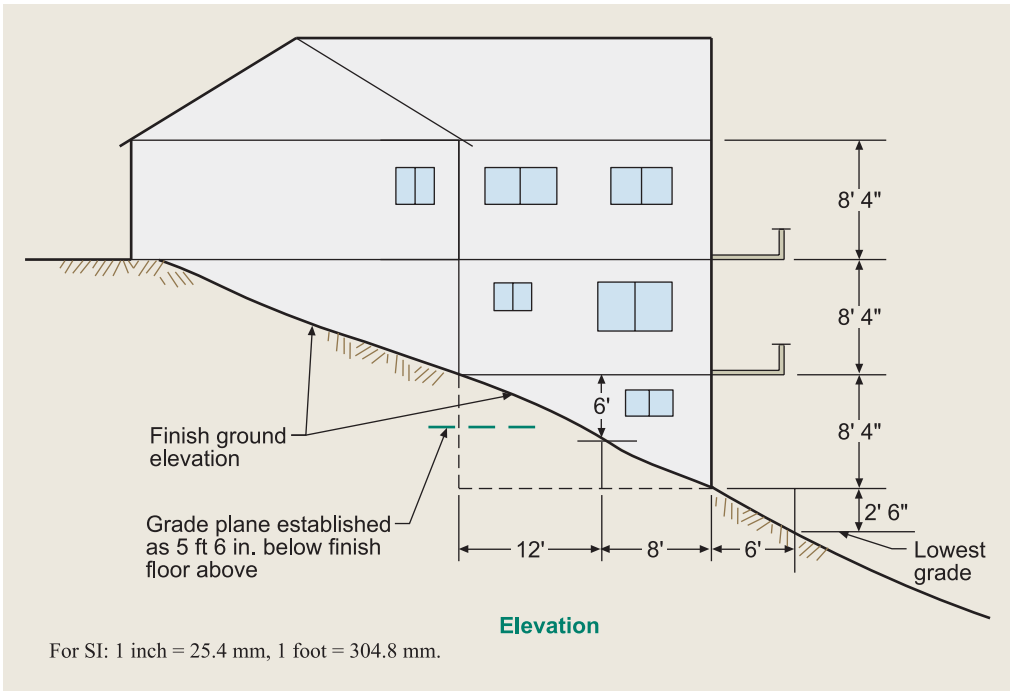


Figure 202-20
Building with
two stories
above grade
plane and one
basement level.

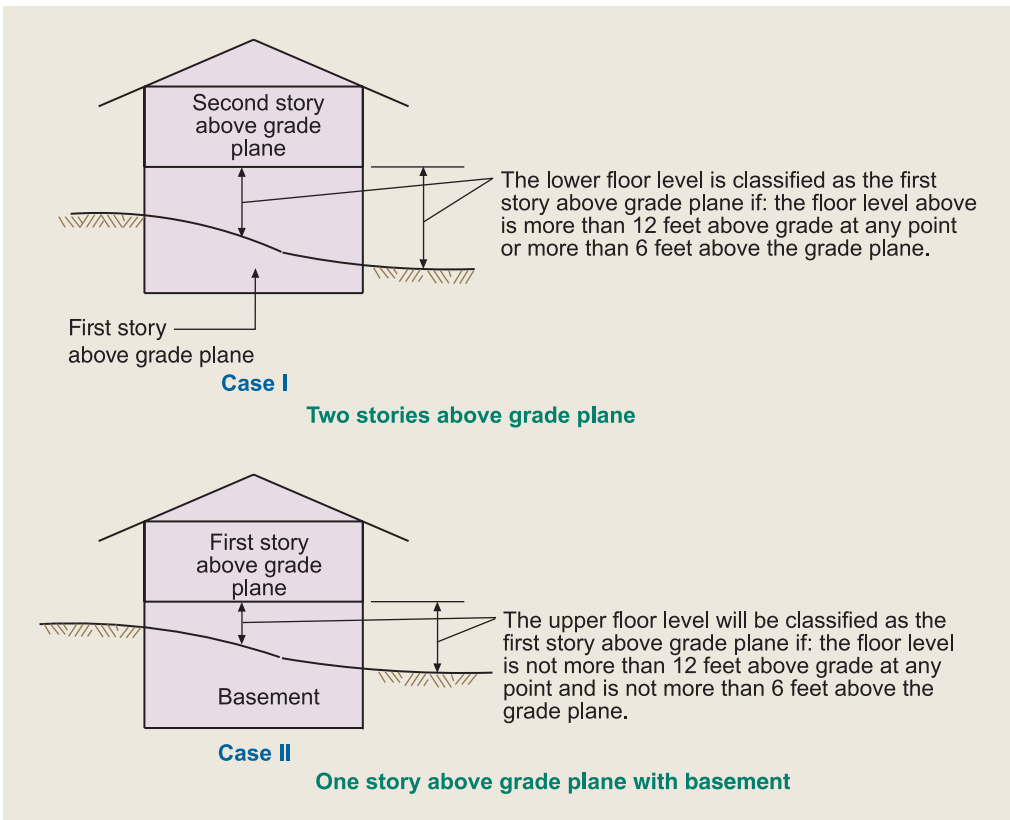


Figure 202-21
Multistory
building.