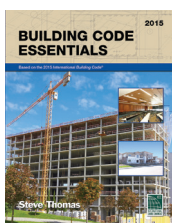# Fire barriers

Fire barriers are used to separate different hazards in a building. They can be used to separate different occupancies, incidental uses and control areas. Fire barriers are also used to protect occupants who are trying to exit the building in an emergency by enclosing interior exit stairways and exit passageways. Unlike fire walls, a fire barrier only needs to extend from the top of the floor/ceiling assembly to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing above. That means that the wall assembly must continue through any concealed spaces, such as spaces above a suspended ceiling. Because it is important for a fire barrier to remain intact and in place during a fire, the construction that supports the wall must have the same fire-resistance rating. [Ref. 707]

The rating of a fire barrier is based on the separation that is needed for the particular application. We discussed separated occupancies in Chapter 6. A fire barrier providing a separation between occupancies must have a fire-resistance rating based on IBC Table 508.4. If the fire barrier is separating an incidental use, the rating is based on IBC Table 509. Other applications of a fire barrier require different fire ratings. Therefore, it is important that the user of the IBC pay attention to the specific ratings. Openings in a fire barrier are based on the fire-resistance rating of the wall (Table 8-7). Doors must close by themselves or be automatic closing. They must also latch when closed. Ducts and air transfer openings in a fire barrier must be protected with a fire damper.

TABLE 8-7 Fire door and shutter fire protection of fire barriers (based on IBC Table 716.5)

Fire barrier rating	Fire door/shutter rating
4	3
3	3
2	1½
1	¾[a]

a. Openings in shafts, exit enclosures, and exit passageway walls are required to have a 1-hour fire rating.