



Miami Beach Fire Department  
*FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION*  
**STANDARDS**



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TOPIC: Balcony in Dwelling Units

STANDARD NO: NEWC-S11  
Revision 0

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This FPS will clarify two re-occurring issues concerning balconies in a residential dwelling unit. The term dwelling unit in this FPS refers to the apartment unit or a hotel guest unit. This standard does not apply to balconies used as common area for occupants in the building such as in a restaurant, terrace, etc.

1) Travel Distance:

The travel distance requirements in Apartment Occupancies are divided into two portions. One requirement is the travel distance within the dwelling unit to the front door. The second requirement is the travel distance from the front door to the exit. FFPC-2004, NFPA 101, Section 30.2.6.

In the past, the fire plans examiner has been measuring the first portion by starting at the most remote point of the balcony and considering all sliding doors to be closed. The fire plans examiner would measure to the farthest door in the balcony and through the unit. If the travel distance of 125 feet was exceeded, the plans examiner was requiring partitions on the balcony to reduce the travel distance.

The design of some of the balconies intended to have access to the full balcony; therefore, the partition wall was not practical. In some cases, the partition would be removed by the owner after the final inspections.

In dwelling units, the owner or guest is aware of the doors that are locked or not locked. It is reasonable to expect the owner to have knowledge of the unlocked door to use in the event of an emergency.

The current procedure shall be to measure from the most remote point (1 foot) of the balcony through the nearest sliding door or swing door into the dwelling unit and through the unit to reach the front door.

2) Sliding Doors

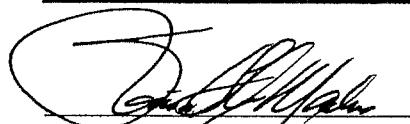
The FFPC-2004, NFPA 101, Section 7.2.1.3 has a requirement that the threshold at doorways shall not exceed ½ inch. There is an exception for exterior sliding doorways in dwelling units that allows ¾ inch threshold.

The problem is created when the owner of the dwelling unit pulls a permit to install Impact Resistant sliding doors for hurricane protection. These doors have a Miami Dade County Product Approval and the sliding doors require a 3-5 inch sill as part of the NOA.

When drawings are submitted for the impact resistant doors and include the specs and NOA, then we will approve the threshold to exceed the ¾ inch and follow the requirements in the NOA. If the sliding doors do not serve for hurricane protection, then the sill must meet the ¾ inch threshold. If the plans do not include the NOA and specs, then reject the plans and request the attached submittal before we can approve.

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Sonia Flores Machen, P.E.  
Fire Marshal

4/5/07  
Date Issued