



Miami Beach Fire Department  
FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION  
STANDARDS



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TOPIC: Sprinkler Protection in Balconies

STANDARD NO: NEWC-S02  
Revision 0

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In the past, the Miami Beach Fire Department has required automatic sprinkler protection for the balconies of new buildings constructed in Miami Beach.

The sprinkler requirement was based on NFPA 13, 1999 Edition, Section 5-13.8.1, which states that "*sprinklers shall be installed under exterior roofs or canopies exceeding 4 ft in width*". There is an exception that permits omission of the sprinkler protection where the roof or canopy is of non-combustible construction. In addition, Section 5-13.8.2 states that *sprinklers shall be installed under roofs or canopies over areas where combustibles are stored and handled*.

The State Fire Marshal's Office issued a Declaratory Statement (64418-02-SP) on February 17, 2003, which states that sprinkler protection is not required in balconies of residential high-rise apartment buildings. The Declaratory Statement is issued for the specific case being appealed.

There are three typical designs for a balcony in the buildings in Miami Beach. First, the balconies are constructed with the floor projecting out from the building (cantilevered) with railing on three sides. Most balconies are of this type of design. Second, the balcony floor is still a projection outside of the building, but two sides have parapet walls and one side is open with railings. Third, the balcony is recessed inside the building footprint with one side open to the air. The third type of balcony can potentially create an environment where sprinkler protection would be beneficial due to the floor area, heat build-up due to the three enclosed sides, and substantial combustible furniture.

The requirements in the latest edition of NFPA 13 (2002 edition) did not change from the State adopted edition. In fact, the commentary for Section 8.14.7.1 states that balconies, decks, and similar projections from the building should be treated as exterior roofs and canopies when applying the criteria of Section 8.14.7.1 (2002 Edition). Therefore, it is clear in the 2002 edition that balconies of noncombustible construction do not require sprinkler protection.

The balcony is not designed to be used as storage of combustibles as intended in the code. Even if there is some combustible furniture, the code intent is storage of combustible material as would normally occur on a dock.

In conclusion, sprinkler protection is not required in open balconies of the first and second type of design described above. Sprinkler protection would not be required for open balconies of the third type of design unless the balcony or terrace meets all the following dimensions: a) walls on three sides, b) depth is 8 ft or greater, and c) total square area is 150 sq ft or greater. If the balcony exceeds all three dimensions, then the fire plans examiner will refer the designer to meet

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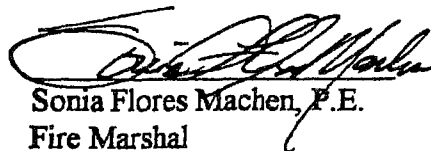
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with the Fire Marshal for review. These dimensions were selected from past projects; and it is a threshold set up to require Fire Marshal review.

The maximum travel distance requirement is based on whether the building has sprinkler protection or not. It will not be based on the balcony sprinkler protection. For example, the balcony is not sprinklered, but the building has an automatic sprinkler system. Therefore, the maximum travel distance is for sprinklered buildings.

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Sonia Flores Machen, P.E.  
Fire Marshal

4/8/04  
Date Issued