

CHAPTER 10  
MEANS OF EGRESS

SECTION 1005.3.6.5  
IBC Interpretation No. 04-04  
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**1005.3.6.5 Exterior stairway protection.** Exterior exit stairs shall be separated from the interior of the building as required in Section 1005.3.2. Openings shall be limited to those necessary for egress from normally occupied spaces.

**Exceptions:**

1. Separation from the interior of the building is not required for occupancies, other than those in Group R-1 or R-2, in buildings that are no more than two stories above grade where the level of exit discharge is the first story above grade.
2. Separation from the interior of the building is not required where the exterior stairway is served by an exterior balcony that connects two remote exterior stairways or other approved exits, with a perimeter that is not less than 50 percent open. To be considered open, the opening shall be a minimum of 50 percent of the height of the enclosing wall, with the top of the openings no less than 7 feet (2134 mm) above the top of the balcony.
3. Separation from the interior of the building is not required for an exterior stairway located in a building or structure that is permitted to have unenclosed interior stairways in accordance with Section 1005.3.2.
4. Separation from the interior of the building is not required for exterior stairways connected to open-ended corridors, provided that:
  - 4.1. The building, including corridors and stairs, shall be equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1 or 903.3.1.2.
  - 4.2. The open-ended corridors comply with Section 1004.3.2.
  - 4.3. The open-ended corridors are connected on each end to an exterior exit stairway complying with Section 1005.3.6.
  - 4.4. At any location in an open-ended corridor where a change of direction exceeding 45 degrees (0.79 rad) occurs, a clear opening of not less than 35 square feet (3.3 m<sup>2</sup>) or an exterior stairway shall be provided. Where clear openings are provided, they shall be located so as to minimize the accumulation of smoke or toxic gases.

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**Q:** Are exterior exit stairs required to be separated with fire-resistive-rated construction from open-ended corridors?

**A:** No. Exception 4 of Section 1005.3.6.5 defines specific provisions that permit the use of exterior stairs connected to open-ended corridors. An exterior stairway need not be separated from the interior of the building or from the open-ended corridor where both comply with the provisions in Items 4.1 through 4.4.

