



# NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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## TECHNICAL BULLETIN

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**Effective Date:** January 1, 2003

**Source Document:** 19NYCRR 1220 - *Residential Code of New York State (RCNYS)*

**Topic:** Townhouse fire separation distances

This is in response to your question regarding townhouse fire separation distances. Specifically you ask regarding the portions of townhouse side walls which extend past the side wall of the adjacent unit. Residential Code of New York State (RCNYS) R302, "Location on Lot," states:

Exterior walls with a fire separation distance less than 3 feet (914 mm) shall have not less than a 1-hour fire-resistance rating with exposure from both sides.

The term "fire separation distance" is defined as:

The distance measured from the building face to the closest interior lot line, to the centerline of a street, alley or public way, or to an imaginary line between two buildings on the property. The distance shall be measured at right angles from the lot line.

The imaginary lot line can be the extension of the line between the townhouses, in which case the side walls in the portions where the townhouses are offset from each other shall have a one-hour fire-resistance rating. Additionally these side walls are prohibited from having openings by RCNYS section R302.2 and the front and rear walls of the townhouses are permitted to have openings (for the entire length) per RCNYS section R302.2 exception 1.

Alternatively, the imaginary lot line can be drawn at an angle away from the common corner of the townhouses. That portion of both the side wall and the front/rear wall which are 3 feet or less from the imaginary line, measured perpendicularly from the line are required to have a one-hour fire-resistance rating and openings in that portion of each wall are prohibited.

Ronald E. Piester, R.A., Director  
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