



Balcony Sprinkler Protection

Q: When is sprinkler protection required on exterior balconies?

A: The first thing that needs to be considered when answering this question is what type of system is being installed.

For an **NFPA 13R** system:

NFPA 13R 6.9.5 (2007 edition) allows sprinklers to be omitted from any porches, balconies, corridors, and stairs that are opened and attached. However, IBC 903.3.1.2.1 (2006 edition) does require sprinkler protection to be provided for exterior balconies, decks, and ground floor patios of dwelling units where the building is of Type V construction (wood frame construction).

Due to the hierarchy of the codes, the requirements of the IBC supersede those of NFPA 13R. Therefore, sprinklers would be required for all balconies where the building is of Type V construction.

For an **NFPA 13** system:

NFPA 13 8.1.1(1) (2007 edition) requires that sprinklers be installed throughout the premises of a building. Per NFPA 13 8.1.1(4), this shall apply to all areas, unless specifically permitted to be omitted by NFPA 13..

NFPA 13 8.15.7.2 allows sprinklers to be omitted from canopies, exterior roofs, or porte-cocheres where the building construction is noncombustible, limited-combustible, or fire retardant treated wood per NFPA 703.

NFPA 13 8.15.7.3 does allow sprinklers to be omitted from below canopies, exterior roofs, or porte-cocheres of combustible construction, provided the exposed finish material is noncombustible, limited-combustible, or fire retardant treated wood as defined by NFPA 703, and if all concealed spaces are either sprinkled or comply with any of the three listed situations in 8.15.7.3(1) to 8.15.7.3(3).

However, NFPA 13 8.15.7.5 does require sprinkler protection under canopies, exterior roofs, or porte-cocheres where combustibles are stored and handled. While the appendix material clarifies that short term storage should not be considered, the commentary states that a judgment call is needed and that sprinklers may be justified where the balcony contains both substantial combustible loading [such as patio furniture] and an ignition source is present [such as a barbeque grill].

In conclusion it would be wise to consult with **ALL** authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) before omitting sprinklers from balconies of combustible construction.