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### SECTION 302 DEFINITIONS

**302.1 Definitions.** The following terms are defined in Chapter 2:

**RECREATIONAL FIRE.** An outdoor fire burning materials other than rubbish where the fuel being burned is not contained in an incinerator, outdoor fireplace, portable outdoor fireplace, barbeque grill or barbeque pit and has a total fuel area of 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height for pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth or similar purposes.

**Q:** Is a fire pit located in the back yard of a single-family dwelling considered a recreational fire?

**A:** No. A recreational fire is not contained. In a fire pit, either a solid fuel or a fuel gas is contained within a noncombustible fixture or a combustible fixture with a noncombustible lining. So long as the fire remains contained within a fire pit, and the fire is not a hazard to the dwelling, landscaping or similar exposures, a fire pit would not be considered a recreational fire. [3-1]

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### SECTION 308 OPEN FLAMES

**308.1.4 Open-flame cooking devices.** Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet (3048 mm) of combustible construction.

**Exceptions:**

1. One- and two-family dwellings.
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.
3. LP-gas cooking devices having LP-gas container with a water capacity not greater than

2½ pounds [nominal 1 pound (0.454 kg) LP-gas capacity].

**Q:** A developer is proposing the renovation of an existing apartment community where barbeque grills are installed on balconies of buildings of Type V-B construction. The grills will not use charcoal or small-sized LP-gas containers. Instead, the grills will be supplied from fixed piping connected to the building fuel gas system. The buildings are not protected by an automatic sprinkler system. Is this arrangement permitted by the IFC?

**A:** No. The provisions in Section 308 rigorously regulate open flames in or near buildings and structures and on all premises. Typical apartment buildings and condominiums of combustible construction represent life safety and conflagration hazards. With the exception of one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses regulated by the IRC requirements, barbeque grills, regardless of the source of fuel, cannot be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction unless the balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system. [3-2]

**Q:** Would a barbecue grill fueled by a one-pound LP-gas cylinder be allowed on a combustible balcony where there is no sprinkler protection?

**A:** Yes, the one-pound-cylinder-fueled barbecue grill is within the amount specified in the Section 308.1.4, Exception 3 and is permitted. [3-3]

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**308.3 Group A occupancies.** Open-flame devices shall not be used in a Group A occupancy.

**Exceptions:**

- Heat-producing equipment complying with Chapter 6 and the *International Mechanical Code*.

**Q:** Exception 2 to Section 308.3 states, “Heat-producing equipment complying with Chapter 6 and the IMC.” How does that relate to the IBC Section 2111 on masonry fireplaces?

**A:** The intent of the IFC is that fireplaces would not be considered open-flame devices when constructed in accordance with the IBC and IMC requirements. [3-4]

**Q:** Are masonry fireplaces permitted in a commercial building with a Group A occupancy?

**A:** Exception 2 allows the construction of fireplaces in a Group A occupancy when they are designed and constructed to the IBC and IMC requirements. [3-5]

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**308.3.1 Open-flame decorative devices.** Open-flame decorative devices shall comply with all of the following restrictions:

1. Class I and Class II liquids and LP-gas shall not be used.
2. Liquid- or solid-fueled lighting devices containing more than 8 ounces (237 ml) of fuel must self-extinguish and not leak fuel at a rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) if tipped over.
3. The device or holder shall be constructed to prevent the spillage of liquid fuel or wax at the rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) when the device or holder is not in an upright position.
4. The device or holder shall be designed so that it will return to the upright position after being tilted to an angle of 45 degrees from vertical.

**Exception:** Devices that self-extinguish if tipped over and do not spill fuel or wax at the rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) if tipped over.

5. The flame shall be enclosed except where openings on the side are not more than

0.375-inch (9.5 mm) diameter or where openings are on the top and the distance to the top is such that a piece of tissue paper placed on the top will not ignite in 10 seconds.

6. Chimneys shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open-flame device.

**Exception:** A chimney is not required to be attached to any open-flame device that will self-extinguish if the device is tipped over.

7. Fuel canisters shall be safely sealed for storage.
8. Storage and handling of combustible liquids shall be in accordance with Chapter 57.
9. Shades, where used, shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open-flame device holder or chimney.
10. Candelabras with flame-lighted candles shall be securely fastened in place to prevent overturning, and shall be located away from occupants using the area and away from possible contact with drapes, curtains or other combustibles.

**Q:** Recently I identified the use of gelled alcohol decorative devices. The devices produce an open flame that is fueled by methanol that is mixed with a gel material. The material safety data sheet indicates the alcohol has a flashpoint temperature of 55°F and a boiling point temperature of 190°F, which would classify the material as a Class IB flammable liquid. Are gelled alcohol decorative devices that are UL listed for residential use prohibited in Assembly Occupancies due to Section 308.3.1, Item 1 of the IFC ?

**A:** Yes. Such a device is prohibited by Section 308.3.1 Item 1. The use of flammable liquids in open-flame decorative devices is prohibited by the IFC because of the liquid's low flash point temperature and high heat release rate. [3-6]

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## SECTION 311 VACANT PREMISES

**311.1.1 Abandoned premises.** Buildings, structures and premises for which an owner cannot be identified or located by dispatch of a certificate of mailing to the last known or registered address, which persistently or repeatedly become unprotected or unsecured, which have been occupied by unauthorized persons or for illegal purposes, or which present a danger of structural collapse or fire spread to adjacent properties shall be considered abandoned, declared unsafe and abated by demolition or rehabilitation in accordance with the *International Property Maintenance Code* and the *International Building Code*.

**Q:** An issue has arose concerning numerous older buildings that have been vacant for several years and now the owner want to reuse them. The Fire Marshal wants to impose the 2012 IFC requirements for sprinklers and feels these buildings should have to meet current codes. In looking at the Existing Building provisions in IBC Chapter 34 I see undefined references to this issue but no real guidance as to when a building that has been vacant must now meet current code to be occupied.

Can you cite any International Code definitions of when a building has been abandoned? Is there a certain timeframe of vacancy that results in it being abandoned?

**A:** There is no specific definition of the term “abandoned” in the *International Codes*. IFC Section 311.1.1 is entitled “Abandoned buildings” and lists several criteria upon which a determination of abandonment may be based. In the scenario you have described, the reoccupancy of a building following any length of vacancy to the same level of hazard within the same occupancy group that it was classified in before the vacancy occurred would not trigger the application of the IBC or IFC as if it