



CHAPTER

2

DEFINITIONS

Section 201 General
Section 202 Definitions
Key Points

Section 201 *General*

A number of definitions are applicable specifically to the *International Building Code*® (IBC®) and may not have an appropriate definition for code purposes in the dictionary. Therefore, definitions are found throughout the IBC to assist the user in the proper application of the requirements. The IBC provides definitions in Chapter 2 of terms that are generally used in a number of varied locations throughout the code. In addition, there are also definitions within most of the chapters of the IBC that are intended to apply primarily within that chapter. In order to determine whether or not a definition for a specific item is contained within the IBC, Chapter 2 must be examined. If the specific definition under review is found in a specific chapter other than Chapter 2, Section 202 will identify the appropriate reference. Although infrequent, the definitions of some terms are contained within the text of the requirement. For example, the definition of *day care* is implied in the description of Group E occupancies. Other frequently used and significant terms are undefined (i.e., 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction), and their meaning can be discerned only from their context. There are numerous definitions in Chapter 2, but only selected definitions are included in this commentary.

An important feature of this section is the requirement that ordinarily accepted meanings be utilized for definitions that are not provided in the code. Such meanings are based upon the context within which the term or terms appear. The code defines terms that have specific intents and meanings insofar as the code is concerned, and leaves it up to the user to apply all undefined terms in the manner in which they are ordinarily used.

Section 202 *Definitions*

AMBULATORY HEALTH CARE FACILITY. Facilities where individuals are provided with medical care on less than a 24-hour basis are classified as Group B occupancies. However, two separate definitions highlight the fact that there are two unique types of persons that occupy such facilities. The important difference involves the self-preservation capabilities of the individuals. Where the occupants are capable of self-preservation (the ability to respond to emergency situations without physical assistance from others), the building is considered an “outpatient clinic” as defined in Section 304.1.1. If such self-preservation cannot be accomplished due to the application of sedation or similar procedures, then the facility is by definition an “ambulatory health care facility” as described in Chapter 2. The need for separate definitions is due to special provisions in Section 422 that specifically regulate those types of facilities where individuals are temporarily incapable of self-preservation. Ambulatory health care facilities are more highly regulated than outpatient clinics in regard to smoke compartmentation, automatic sprinkler system protection, and fire alarm system requirements.

APPROVED. Throughout the code, the term *approved* is used to describe a specific material or type of construction, such as approved automatic flush bolts mentioned in Section 1008.1.9.3, Item 3, or an approved barrier in vertical exit enclosures addressed in Section 1022.7. Where *approved* is used, it merely means that such design, material or method of construction is acceptable to the building official (or other authority having jurisdiction), based on the intent of the code. It would seem appropriate that the building official base his or her decision of approval on the result of investigations or tests, if applicable, or by reason of accepted principles.

APPROVED SOURCE. One provision mandating the use of an approved source is found in Section 104.11.1, which specifically identifies the use of valid research reports as an acceptable method the building official can utilize to evaluate alternative methods and

materials of construction. It is expected that the authors of such reports be technically competent and appropriately experienced in the subject under consideration. The building official is designated as the individual solely charged with ascertaining that the person, firm or corporation providing the technical evaluation meets the necessary qualifications.

ATTIC. Several provisions apply to the attic area of a building, such as those relating to ventilation of the attic space. In order to fully clarify that portion of a building defined as an attic, Section 202 identifies an attic as that space between the ceiling beams at the top story and the roof rafters. An attic designation is appropriate only if the area is not considered occupiable. Where this area has a floor, it would be defined as a story. A common misuse of terminology is the designation of a space as a *habitable* or *occupiable* attic. Such a designation is inappropriate insofar as once such a space is utilized for some degree of occupancy, it is no longer deemed an attic.

BUILDING OFFICIAL. Regardless of title, the individual who is designated by the jurisdiction as the person who administers and enforces the IBC is considered by the code to be the building official. In addition, all other individuals who have been given similar enforcement authority, such as plans examiners and inspectors, are also considered building officials to a limited degree under the IBC. A further discussion of the duties and responsibilities of the building official is found in the commentary on Section 104.

COURT. Open and unobstructed to the sky above, an exterior area is considered a court where it is enclosed on at least three sides by exterior walls of the building or other enclosing elements, such as a screen wall. Regulations for courts, including those used for egress purposes, are found throughout the code. Examples of courts are shown in Figure 202-1. Although the IBC does not mandate a minimum depth for consideration as a court, it is expected that certain design and structural features of the building that create minor exterior wall offsets would not require designation as a court. The determination of the presence of a court under such conditions is subject to the building official's discretion.

DWELLING UNIT AND DWELLING. A dwelling unit is considered a single unit that provides living facilities for one or more persons. Dwelling units include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, thus providing a complete independent living arrangement. A dwelling unit, while typically addressed in the IBC as a portion of a Group R-2 occupancy, may also be classified as Group R-1 or R-3. A dwelling is a building that contains either one or two dwelling units. Dwellings are typically regulated under the provisions of the *International Residential Code*® (IRC®), as noted in the exception to Section 101.2.

HABITABLE SPACE. An area within a building, typically a residential occupancy, used for living, sleeping, eating or cooking purposes would be considered habitable space. Those areas not considered to meet this definition include bathrooms, closets, hallways, laundry rooms, storage rooms and utility spaces. Obviously, habitable spaces as defined in this section are those areas usually occupied, and as such are more highly regulated than their accessory use areas. Although typical, it is not necessary that a room or area be finished in order to be considered habitable space. It is not uncommon for a dwelling unit to have a large basement that is not completely finished-out. Nevertheless, the basement may be used as living space, particularly for children who use it as a playroom. Such a basement would

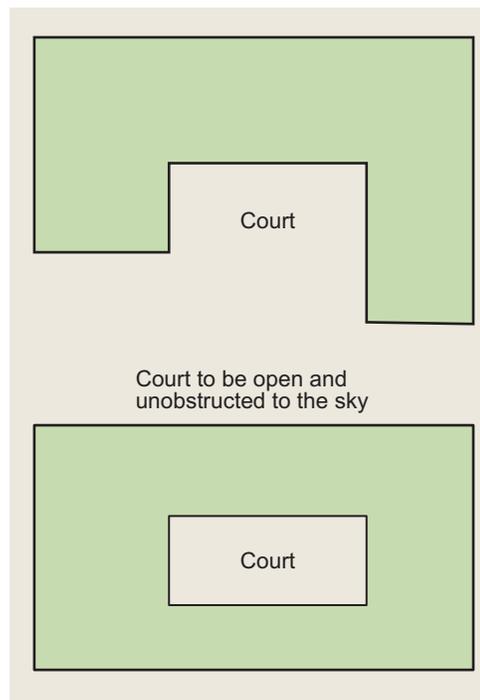


Figure 202-1
Definition of
courts