RESOURCE A

GUIDELINES ON FIRE RATINGS OF ARCHAIC MATERIALS AND ASSEMBLIES

Introduction

The *International Existing Building Code* (IEBC) is a comprehensive code with the goal of addressing all aspects of work taking place in existing buildings and providing user friendly methods and tools for regulation and improvement of such buildings. This resource document is included within the cover of the IEBC with that goal in mind and as a step towards accomplishing that goal.

In the process of *repair* and *alteration* of existing buildings, based on the nature and the extent of the work, the IEBC might require certain upgrades in the fire resistance rating of building elements, at which time it becomes critical for the designers and the code officials to be able to determine the fire resistance rating of the *existing building* elements as part of the overall evaluation for the assessment of the need for improvements. This resource document provides a guideline for such an evaluation for fire resistance rating of archaic materials that is not typically found in the modern model building codes.

Resource A is only a guideline and is not intended to be a document for specific adoption as it is not written in the format or language of ICC's *International Codes* and is not subject to the code development process.

PURPOSE

The *Guideline on Fire Ratings of Archaic Materials and Assemblies* focuses upon the fire-related performance of archaic construction. "Archaic" encompasses construction typical of an earlier time, generally prior to 1950. "Fire-related performance" includes fire resistance, flame spread, smoke production, and degree of combustibility.

The purpose of this guideline is to update the information which was available at the time of original construction, for use by architects, engineers, and code officials when evaluating the fire safety of a rehabilitation project. In addition, information relevant to the evaluation of general classes of materials and types of construction is presented for those cases when documentation of the fire performance of a particular archaic material or assembly cannot be found.

It has been assumed that the building materials and their fastening, joining, and incorporation into the building structure are sound mechanically. Therefore, some determination must be made that the original manufacture, the original construction practice, and the rigors of aging and use have not weakened the building. This assessment can often be difficult because process and quality control was not good in many industries, and variations among locally available raw materials and manufacturing techniques often resulted in a product which varied widely in its strength and durability. The properties of iron and steel, for example, varied widely, depending on the mill and the process used.

There is nothing inherently inferior about archaic materials or construction techniques. The pressures that promote fundamental change are most often economic or technological—matters not necessarily related to concerns for safety. The high cost of labor made wood lath and plaster uneconomical. The high cost of land and the congestion of the cities provided the impetus for high-rise construction. Improved technology made it possible. The difficulty with archaic materials is not a question of suitability, but familiarity.

Code requirements for the fire performance of key building elements (e.g., walls, floor/ceiling assemblies, doors, shaft enclosures) are stated in performance terms: hours of fire resistance. It matters not whether these elements were built in 1908 or 1980, only that they provide the required degree of fire resistance. The level of performance will be defined by the local community, primarily through the enactment of a building or rehabilitation code. This guideline is only a tool to help evaluate the various building elements, regardless of what the level of performance is required to be.

The problem with archaic materials is simply that documentation of their fire performance is not readily available. The application of engineering judgment is more difficult because building officials may not be familiar with the materials or construction method involved. As a result, either a full-scale fire test is required or the archaic construction in question removed and replaced. Both alternatives are time consuming and wasteful.

This guideline and the accompanying Appendix are designed to help fill this information void. By providing the necessary documentation, there will be a firm basis for the continued acceptance of archaic materials and assemblies.

1
FIRE-RELATED PERFORMANCE OF ARCHAIC MATERIALS AND ASSEMBLIES

1.1
FIRE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This guideline does not specify the level of performance required for the various building components. These requirements are controlled by the building occupancy and use and are set forth in the local building or rehabilitation code.

The fire resistance of a given building element is established by subjecting a sample of the assembly to a "standard" fire test which follows a "standard" time-temperature curve. This test method has changed little since the 1920s. The test results tabulated in the Appendix have been adjusted to reflect current test methods.

The current model building codes cite other fire-related properties not always tested for in earlier years: flame spread, smoke production, and degree of combustibility. However, they can generally be assumed to fall within well defined values because the principal combustible component of archaic materials is cellulose. Smoke production is more important today because of the increased use of plastics. However, the early flame spread tests, developed in the early 1940s, also included a test for smoke production.

"Plastics," one of the most important classes of contemporary materials, were not found in the review of archaic materials. If plastics are to be used in a rehabilitated building, they should be evaluated by contemporary standards. Information and documentation of their fire-related properties and performance is widely available.

Flame spread, smoke production and degree of combustibility are discussed in detail below. Test results for eight common species of lumber, published in an Underwriter's Laboratories' report (104), are noted in the following table:

TUNNEL TEST RESULTS FOR EIGHT SPECIES OF LUMBER

SPECIES OF LUMBER	FLAME SPREAD	FUEL CONTRIBUTED	SMOKE DEVELOPED
Western White Pine	75	50-60	50
Northern White Pine	120-215	120-140	60-65
Ponderosa Pine	80-215	120-135	100-110
Yellow Pine	180-190	130-145	275-305
Red Gum	140-155	125-175	40-60
Yellow Birch	105-110	100-105	45-65
Douglas Fir	65-100	50-80	10-100

Flame Spread

The flame spread of interior finishes is most often measured by the ASTM E 84 "tunnel test." This test measures how far and how fast the flames spread across the surface of the test sample. The resulting flame spread rating (FSR) is expressed as a number on a continuous scale where cement-asbestos board is 0 and

* Some codes are Roman numerals, others use letters

red oak is 100. (Materials with a flame spread greater than red oak have an FSR greater than 100.) The scale is divided into distinct groups or classes. The most commonly used flame spread classifications are: Class I or A*, with a 0-25 FSR; Class II or B, with a 26-75 FSR; and Class III or C, with a 76-200 FSR. The *NFPA Life Safety Code* also has a Class D (201-500 FSR) and Class E (over 500 FSR) interior finish.

These classifications are typically used in modern building codes to restrict the rate of fire spread. Only the first three classifications are normally permitted, though not all classes of materials can be used in all places throughout a building. For example, the interior finish of building materials used in exits or in corridors leading to exits is more strictly regulated than materials used within private dwelling units.

In general, inorganic archaic materials (e.g., bricks or tile) can be expected to be in Class I. Materials of whole wood are mostly Class II. Whole wood is defined as wood used in the same form as sawn from the tree. This is in contrast to the contemporary reconstituted wood products such as plywood, fiberboard, hardboard, or particle board. If the organic archaic material is not whole wood, the flame spread classification could be well over 200 and thus would be particularly unsuited for use in exits and other critical locations in a building. Some plywoods and various wood fiberboards have flame spreads over 200. Although they can be treated with fire retardants to reduce their flame spread, it would be advisable to assume that all such products have a flame spread over 200 unless there is information to the contrary.

Smoke Production

The evaluation of smoke density is part of the ASTM E 84 tunnel test. For the eight species of lumber shown in the table above, the highest levels are 275-305 for Yellow Pine, but most of the others are less smoky than red oak which has an index of 100. The advent of plastics caused substantial increases in the smoke density values measured by the tunnel test. The ensuing limitation of the smoke production for wall and ceiling materials by the model building codes has been a reaction to the introduction of plastic materials. In general, cellulosic materials fall in the 50-300 range of smoke density which is below the general limitation of 450 adopted by many codes.

Degree of Combustibility

The model building codes tend to define "noncombustibility" on the basis of having passed ASTM E 136 or if the material is totally inorganic. The acceptance of gypsum wallboard as noncombustible is based on limiting paper thickness to not over $1/_8$ inch and a 0-50 flame spread rating by ASTM E 84. At times there were provisions to define a Class I or A material (0-25 FSR) as noncombustible, but this is not currently recognized by most model building codes.

If there is any doubt whether or not an archaic material is noncombustible, it would be appropriate to send out samples for evaluation. If an archaic material is determined to be noncombustible according to ASTM E 136, it can be expected that it will not contribute fuel to the fire.

1.2
COMBUSTIBLE CONSTRUCTION TYPES

One of the earliest forms of timber construction used exterior load-bearing masonry walls with columns and/or wooden walls supporting wooden beams and floors in the interior of the building. This form of construction, often called "mill" or "heavy timber" construction, has approximately 1 hour fire resistance. The exterior walls will generally contain the fire within the building.

With the development of dimensional lumber, there was a switch from heavy timber to "balloon frame" construction. The balloon frame uses load-bearing exterior wooden walls which have long timbers often extending from foundation to roof. When longer lumber became scarce, another form of construction, "platform" framing, replaced the balloon framing. The difference between the two systems is significant because platform framing is automatically fire-blocked at every floor while balloon framing commonly has concealed spaces that extend unblocked from basement to attic. The architect, engineer, and *code official* must be alert to the details of construction and the ease with which fire can spread in concealed spaces.

2
BUILDING EVALUATION

A given rehabilitation project will most likely go through several stages. The preliminary evaluation process involves the designer in surveying the prospective building. The fire resistance of *existing building* materials and construction systems is identified; potential problems are noted for closer study. The final evaluation phase includes: developing design solutions to upgrade the fire resistance of building elements, if necessary; preparing working drawings and specifications; and the securing of the necessary code approvals.

2.1
PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

A preliminary evaluation should begin with a building survey to determine the existing materials, the general arrangement of the structure and the use of the occupied spaces, and the details of construction. The designer needs to know "what is there" before a decision can be reached about what to keep and what to remove during the rehabilitation process. This preliminary evaluation should be as detailed as necessary to make initial plans. The fire-related properties need to be determined from the applicable building or rehabilitation code, and the materials and assemblies existing in the building then need to be evaluated for these properties. Two work sheets are shown below to facilitate the preliminary evaluation.

Two possible sources of information helpful in the preliminary evaluation are the original building plans and the building code in effect at the time of original construction. Plans may be on file with the local building department or in the offices of the original designers (e.g., architect, engineer) or their successors. If plans are available, the investigator should verify that the building was actually constructed as called for in the plans, as well as incorporate any later alterations or changes to the building. Earlier editions of the local building code should be on file with the building official. The code in effect at the time of construction will contain fire performance criteria. While this is no guarantee that the required performance was actually provided, it does give the investigator some guidance as to the level of performance which may be expected. Under some code administration and enforcement systems, the code in effect at the time of construction also defines the level of performance that must be provided at the time of rehabilitation.

Figure 1 illustrates one method for organizing preliminary field notes. Space is provided for the materials, dimensions, and condition of the principal building elements. Each floor of the structure should be visited and the appropriate information obtained. In practice, there will often be identical materials and construction on every floor, but the exception may be of vital importance. A schematic diagram should be prepared of each floor showing the layout of exits and hallways and indicating where each element described in the field notes fits into the structure as a whole. The exact arrangement of interior walls within apartments is of secondary importance from a fire safety point of view and need not be shown on the drawings unless these walls are required by code to have a fire resistance rating.

The location of stairways and elevators should be clearly marked on the drawings. All exterior means of escape (e.g., fire escapes) should be identified.*

The following notes explain the entries in Figure 1.

Exterior Bearing Walls: Many old buildings utilize heavily constructed walls to support the floor/ceiling assemblies at the exterior of the building. There may be columns and/or interior bearing walls within the structure, but the exterior walls are an important factor in assessing the fire safety of a building.

The field investigator should note how the floor/ceiling assemblies are supported at the exterior of the building. If columns are incorporated in the exterior walls, the walls may be considered non-bearing.

Interior Bearing Walls: It may be difficult to determine whether or not an interior wall is load bearing, but the field investigator should attempt to make this determination. At a later stage of the rehabilitation process, this question will need to be determined exactly. Therefore, the field notes should be as accurate as possible.

Exterior Nonbearing Walls: The fire resistance of the exterior walls is important for two reasons. These walls (both bearing and non-bearing) are depended upon to: a) contain a fire within the building of origin; or b) keep an exterior fire *outside* the building. It is therefore important to indicate on the drawings where any openings are located as well as the materials and construction of all doors or shutters. The drawings should indicate the presence of wired glass, its thickness and framing, and identify the materials used for windows and door frames. The protection of openings adjacent to exterior means of escape (e.g., exterior stairs, fire escapes) is particularly important. The ground floor drawing should locate the building on the property and indicate the precise distances to adjacent buildings.

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* Problems providing adequate exiting are discussed at length in the *Egress Guideline for Residential Rehabilitation.*

Building Element		Materials	Thickness	Condition	Notes
Exterior Bearing Walls					
Interior Bearing Walls					
Exterior Nonbearing Walls					
Interior Nonbearing Walls or Partitions:	A				
	B				
Structural Frame: Columns					
Beams					
Other					
Floor/Ceiling Structural System Spanning					
Roofs					
Doors (including frame and hardware): a) Enclosed vertical exitway					
b) Enclosed horizontal exitway					
c) Other					

FIGURE 1 — PRELIMINARY EVALUATION FIELD NOTES

Interior Nonbearing Walls (Partitions): A partition is a "wall that extends from floor to ceiling and subdivides space within any story of a building." (48) Figure 1 has two categories (A & B) for Interior Nonbearing Walls (Partitions) which can be used for different walls, such as hallway walls as compared to inter-apartment walls. Under some circumstances there may be only one type of wall construction; in others, three or more types of wall construction may occur.

The field investigator should be alert for differences in function as well as in materials and construction details. In general, the details within apartments are not as important as the major exit paths and stairwells. The preliminary field investigation should attempt to determine the thickness of all walls. A term introduced below called "thickness design" will depend on an accurate ($\pm$ $\frac{1}{4}$ inch) determination. Even though this initial field survey is called "preliminary," the data generated should be as accurate and complete as possible.

The field investigator should note the exact location from which observations are recorded. For instance, if a hole is found through a stairwell wall which allows a cataloguing of the construction details, the field investigation notes should reflect the location of the "find." At the preliminary stage it is not necessary to core every wall; the interior details of construction can usually be determined at some location.

Structural Frame: There may or may not be a complete skeletal frame, but usually there are columns, beams, trusses, or other like elements. The dimensions and spacing of the structural

elements should be measured and indicated on the drawings. For instance, if there are ten inch square columns located on a thirty foot square grid throughout the building, this should be noted. The structural material and cover or protective materials should be identified wherever possible. The thickness of the cover materials should be determined to an accuracy of $\pm$ $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. As discussed above, the preliminary field survey usually relies on accidental openings in the cover materials rather than a systematic coring technique.

Floor/Ceiling Structural Systems: The span between supports should be measured. If possible, a sketch of the cross-section of the system should be made. If there is no location where accidental damage has opened the floor/ceiling construction to visual inspection, it is necessary to make such an opening. An evaluation of the fire resistance of a floor/ceiling assembly requires detailed knowledge of the materials and their arrangement. Special attention should be paid to the cover on structural steel elements and the condition of suspended ceilings and similar membranes.

Roofs: The preliminary field survey of the roof system is initially concerned with water-tightness. However, once it is apparent that the roof is sound for ordinary use and can be retained in the rehabilitated building, it becomes necessary to evaluate the fire performance. The field investigator must measure the thickness and identify the types of materials which have been used. Be aware that there may be several layers of roof materials.

Doors: Doors to stairways and hallways represent some of the most important fire elements to be considered within a building. The uses of the spaces separated largely controls the level of fire performance necessary. Walls and doors enclosing stairs or elevator shafts would normally require a higher level of performance than between a the bedroom and bath. The various uses are differentiated in Figure 1.

Careful measurements of the thickness of door panels must be made, and the type of core material within each door must be determined. It should be noted whether doors have self-closing devices; the general operation of the doors should be checked. The latch should engage and the door should fit tightly in the frame. The hinges should be in good condition. If glass is used in the doors, it should be identified as either plain glass or wired glass mounted in either a wood or steel frame.

Materials: The field investigator should be able to identify ordinary building materials. In situations where an unfamiliar material is found, a sample should be obtained. This sample should measure at least 10 cubic inches so that an ASTM E 136 fire test can be conducted to determine if it is combustible.

Thickness: The thickness of all materials should be measured accurately since, under certain circumstances, the level of fire resistance is very sensitive to the material thickness.

Condition: The method of attaching the various layers and facings to one another or to the supporting structural element should be noted under the appropriate building element. The "secureness" of the attachment and the general condition of the layers and facings should be noted here.

Notes: The "Notes" column can be used for many purposes, but it might be a good idea to make specific references to other field notes or drawings.

After the building survey is completed, the data collected must be analyzed. A suggested work sheet for organizing this information is given below as Figure 2.

The required fire resistance and flame spread for each building element are normally established by the local building or rehabilitation code. The fire performance of the existing materials and assemblies should then be estimated, using one of the techniques described below. If the fire performance of the *existing building* element(s) is equal to or greater than that required, the materials and assemblies may remain. If the fire performance is less than required, then corrective measures must be taken.

The most common methods of upgrading the level of protection are to either remove and replace the *existing building* element(s) or to *repair* and upgrade the existing materials and assemblies. Other fire protection measures, such as automatic sprinklers or detection and alarm systems, also could be considered, though they are beyond the scope of this guideline. If the upgraded protection is still less than that required or deemed to be acceptable, additional corrective measures must be taken. This process must continue until an acceptable level of performance is obtained.

FIGURE 2   PRELIMINARY EVALUATION WORKSHEET

Building Element		Required Fire Resistance	Required Flame Spread	Estimated Fire Resistance	Estimated Flame Spread	Method of Upgrading	Estimated Upgraded Protection	Notes
Exterior Bearing Walls								
Interior Bearing Walls								
Exterior Nonbearing Walls								
Interior Nonbearing Walls or Partitions:	A							
	B							
Structural Frame:								
Columns								
Beams								
Other								
Floor/Ceiling Structural System Spanning								
Roofs								
Doors (including frame and hardware):								
a) Enclosed vertical exitway								
b) Enclosed horizontal exitway								
c) Others								

2.2
FIRE RESISTANCE OF EXISTING BUILDING ELEMENTS

The fire resistance of the *existing building* elements can be estimated from the tables and histograms contained in the Appendix. The Appendix is organized first by type of building element: walls, columns, floor/ceiling assemblies, beams, and doors. Within each building element, the tables are organized by type of construction (e.g., masonry, metal, wood frame), and then further divided by minimum dimensions or thickness of the building element.

A histogram precedes every table that has 10 or more entries. The X-axis measures fire resistance in hours; the Y-axis shows the number of entries in that table having a given level of fire resistance. The histograms also contain the location of each entry within that table for easy cross-referencing.

The histograms, because they are keyed to the tables, can speed the preliminary investigation. For example, Table 1.3.2, *Wood Frame Walls 4" to Less Than 6" Thick*, contains 96 entries. Rather than study each table entry, the histogram shows

that every wall assembly listed in that table has a fire resistance of less than 2 hours. If the building code required the wall to have 2 hours fire resistance, the designer, with a minimum of effort, is made aware of a problem that requires closer study.

Suppose the code had only required a wall of 1 hour fire resistance. The histogram shows far fewer complying elements (19) than noncomplying ones (77). If the existing assembly is not one of the 19 complying entries, there is a strong possibility the existing assembly is deficient. The histograms can also be used in the converse situation. If the existing assembly is not one of the smaller number of entries with a lower than required fire resistance, there is a strong possibility the existing assembly will be acceptable.

At some point, the *existing building* component or assembly must be located within the tables. Otherwise, the fire resistance must be determined through one of the other techniques presented in the guideline. Locating the building component in the Appendix Tables not only guarantees the accuracy of the fire resistance rating, but also provides a source of documentation for the building official.

2.3
EFFECTS OF PENETRATIONS IN FIRE RESISTANT ASSEMBLIES

There are often many features in existing walls or floor/ceiling assemblies which were not included in the original certification or fire testing. The most common examples are pipes and utility wires passed through holes poked through an assembly. During the life of the building, many penetrations are added, and by the time a building is ready for rehabilitation it is not sufficient to just consider the fire resistance of the assembly as originally constructed. It is necessary to consider all penetrations and their relative impact upon fire performance. For instance, the fire resistance of the corridor wall may be less important than the effect of plain glass doors or transoms. In fact, doors are the most important single class of penetrations.

A fully developed fire generates substantial quantities of heat and excess gaseous fuel capable of penetrating any holes which might be present in the walls or ceiling of the fire compartment. In general, this leads to a severe degradation of the fire resistance of those building elements and to a greater potential for fire spread. This is particularly applicable to penetrations located high in a compartment where the positive pressure of the fire can force the unburned gases through the penetration.

Penetrations in a floor/ceiling assembly will generally completely negate the barrier qualities of the assembly and will lead to rapid spread of fire to the space above. It will not be a problem, however, if the penetrations are filled with noncombustible materials strongly fastened to the structure. The upper half of walls are similar to the floor/ceiling assembly in that a positive pressure can reasonably be expected in the top of the room, and this will push hot and/or burning gases through the penetration unless it is completely sealed.

Building codes require doors installed in fire resistive walls to resist the passage of fire for a specified period of time. If the door to a fully involved room is not closed, a large plume of fire will typically escape through the doorway, preventing anyone from using the space outside the door while allowing the fire to spread. This is why door closers are so important. Glass in doors and transoms can be expected to rapidly shatter unless constructed of listed or approved wire glass in a steel frame. As with other building elements, penetrations or non-rated portions of doors and transoms must be upgraded or otherwise protected.

Table 5.1 in Section V of the Appendix contains 41 entries of doors mounted in sound tightfitting frames. Part 3.4 below outlines one procedure for evaluating and possibly upgrading existing doors.

3
FINAL EVALUATION AND DESIGN SOLUTION

The final evaluation begins after the rehabilitation project has reached the final design stage and the choices made to keep certain archaic materials and assemblies in the rehabilitated building. The final evaluation process is essentially a more refined and detailed version of the preliminary evaluation. The specific fire resistance and flame spread requirements are determined for the project. This may involve local building and fire officials reviewing the preliminary evaluation as depicted in Figures 1 and 2 and the field drawings and notes. When necessary, provisions must be made to upgrade *existing building* elements to provide the required level of fire performance.

There are several approaches to design solutions that can make possible the continued use of archaic materials and assemblies in the rehabilitated structure. The simplest case occurs when the materials and assembly in question are found within the Appendix Tables and the fire performance properties satisfy code requirements. Other approaches must be used, though, if the assembly cannot be found within the Appendix or the fire performance needs to be upgraded. These approaches have been grouped into two classes: experimental and theoretical.

3.1
THE EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

If a material or assembly found in a building is not listed in the Appendix Tables, there are several other ways to evaluate fire performance. One approach is to conduct the appropriate fire test(s) and thereby determine the fire-related properties directly. There are a number of laboratories in the United States which routinely conduct the various fire tests. A current list can be obtained by writing the Center for Fire Research, National Bureau of Standards, Washington, D.C. 20234.

The contract with any of these testing laboratories should require their observation of specimen preparation as well as the testing of the specimen. A complete description of where and how the specimen was obtained from the building, the transportation of the specimen, and its preparation for testing should be noted in detail so that the building official can be satisfied that the fire test is representative of the actual use.

The test report should describe the fire test procedure and the response of the material or assembly. The laboratory usually submits a cover letter with the report to describe the provisions of the fire test that were satisfied by the material or assembly under investigation. A building official will generally require this cover letter, but will also read the report to confirm that the material or assembly complies with the code requirements. Local code officials should be involved in all phases of the testing process.

The experimental approach can be costly and time consuming because specimens must be taken from the building and transported to the testing laboratory. When a load bearing assembly has continuous reinforcement, the test specimen must be removed from the building, transported, and tested in one piece. However, when the fire performance cannot be determined by other means, there may be no alternative to a full-scale test.

A "nonstandard" small-scale test can be used in special cases. Sample sizes need only be 10-25 square feet (0.93-2.3 m^2), while full-scale tests require test samples of either 100 or 180 square feet (9.3 or 17 m^2) in size. This small-scale test is best suited for testing nonload-bearing assemblies against thermal transmission only.

3.2
THE THEORETICAL APPROACH

There will be instances when materials and assemblies in a building undergoing rehabilitation cannot be found in the Appendix Tables. Even where test results are available for more or less similar construction, the proper classification may not be immediately apparent. Variations in dimensions, loading conditions, materials, or workmanship may markedly affect the performance of the individual building elements, and the extent of such a possible effect cannot be evaluated from the tables.

Theoretical methods being developed offer an alternative to the full-scale fire tests discussed above. For example, Section 4302(b) of the 1979 edition of the *Uniform Building Code* specifically allows an engineering design for fire resistance in lieu of conducting full-scale tests. These techniques draw upon computer simulation and mathematical modeling, thermodynamics, heat-flow analysis, and materials science to predict the fire performance of building materials and assemblies.

One theoretical method, known as the "Ten Rules of Fire Endurance Ratings," was published by T. Z. Harmathy in the May, 1965 edition of *Fire Technology*. (35) Harmathy's Rules provide a foundation for extending the data within the Appendix Tables to analyze or upgrade current as well as archaic building materials or assemblies.

HARMATHY'S TEN RULES

Rule 1: The "thermal"* fire endurance of a construction consisting of a number of parallel layers is greater than the sum of the "thermal" fire endurances characteristic of the individual layers when exposed separately to fire.

The minimum performance of an untested assembly can be estimated if the fire endurance of the individual components is known. Though the exact rating of the assembly cannot be stated, the endurance of the assembly is greater than the sum of the endurance of the components.

When a building assembly or component is found to be deficient, the fire endurance can be upgraded by providing a protective membrane. This membrane could be a new layer of brick, plaster, or drywall. The fire endurance of this membrane is called the "finish rating." Appendix Tables 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 contain the finish ratings for the most commonly employed materials. (See also the notes to Rule 2).

The test criteria for the finish rating is the same as for the thermal fire endurance of the total assembly: average temperature increases of 250°F (121°C) above ambient or 325°F (163°C) above ambient at any one place with the membrane being exposed to the fire. The temperature is measured at the interface of the assembly and the protective membrane.

Rule 2: The fire endurance of a construction does not decrease with the addition of further layers.

Harmathy notes that this rule is a consequence of the previous rule. Its validity follows from the fact that the additional

layers increase both the resistance to heat flow and the heat capacity of the construction. This, in turn, reduces the rate of temperature rise at the unexposed surface.

This rule is not just restricted to "thermal" performance but affects the other fire test criteria: direct flame passage, cotton waste ignition, and load bearing performance. This means that certain restrictions must be imposed on the materials to be added and on the loading conditions. One restriction is that a new layer, if applied to the exposed surface, must not produce additional thermal stresses in the construction, i.e., its thermal expansion characteristics must be similar to those of the adjacent layer. Each new layer must also be capable of contributing enough additional strength to the assembly to sustain the added dead load. If this requirement is not fulfilled, the allowable live load must be reduced by an amount equal to the weight of the new layer. Because of these limitations, this rule should not be applied without careful consideration.

Particular care must be taken if the material added is a good thermal insulator. Properly located, the added insulation could improve the "thermal" performance of the assembly. Improperly located, the insulation could block necessary thermal transmission through the assembly, thereby subjecting the structural elements to greater temperatures for longer periods of time, and could cause premature structural failure of the supporting members.

Rule 3: The fire endurance of constructions containing continuous air gaps or cavities is greater than the fire endurance of similar constructions of the same weight, but containing no air gaps or cavities.

By providing for voids in a construction, additional resistances are produced in the path of heat flow. Numerical heat flow analyses indicate that a 10 to 15 percent increase in fire endurance can be achieved by creating an air gap at the midplane of a brick wall. Since the gross volume is also increased by the presence of voids, the air gaps and cavities have a beneficial effect on stability as well. However, constructions containing combustible materials within an air gap may be regarded as exceptions to this rule because of the possible development of burning in the gap.

There are numerous examples of this rule in the tables. For instance:

Table 1.1.4; Item W-8-M-82: Cored concrete masonry, nominal 8 inch thick wall with one unit in wall thickness and with 62 percent minimum of solid material in each unit, load bearing (80 PSI). Fire endurance: $2^1/_2$ hours.

Table 1.1.5; Item W-10-M-11: Cored concrete mansonry, nominal 10 inch thick wall with two units in wall thickness and a 2-inch (51 mm) air space, load bearing (80 PSI). The units are essentially the same as item W-8-M-82. Fire endurance: $3^1/_2$ hours.

These walls show 1 hour greater fire endurance by the addition of the 2-inch (51 mm) air space.

Rule 4: The farther an air gap or cavity is located from the exposed surface, the more beneficial is its effect on the fire endurance.

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* The "thermal" fire endurance is the time at which the average temperature on the unexposed side of a construction exceeds its initial value by 250° when the other side is exposed to the "standard" fire specified by ASTM Test Method E-19.

Radiation dominates the heat transfer across an air gap or cavity, and it is markedly higher where the temperature is higher.

The air gap or cavity is thus a poor insulator if it is located in a region which attains high temperatures during fire exposure.

Some of the clay tile designs take advantage of these factors. The double cell design, for instance, ensures that there is a cavity near the unexposed face. Some floor/ceiling assemblies have air gaps or cavities near the top surface and these enhance their thermal performance.

Rule 5: The fire endurance of a construction cannot be increased by increasing the thickness of a completely enclosed air layer.

Harmathy notes that there is evidence that if the thickness of the air layer is larger than about $^1/_2$ inch (12.7 mm), the heat transfer through the air layer depends only on the temperature of the bounding surfaces, and is practically independent of the distance between them. This rule is not applicable if the air layer is not completely enclosed, i.e., if there is a possibility of fresh air entering the gap at an appreciable rate.

Rule 6: Layers of materials of low thermal conductivity are better utilized on that side of the construction on which fire is more likely to happen.

As in Rule 4, the reason lies in the heat transfer process, though the conductivity of the solid is much less dependent on the ambient temperature of the materials. The low thermal conductor creates a substantial temperature differential to be established across its thickness under transient heat flow conditions. This rule may not be applicable to materials undergoing physico-chemical changes accompanied by significant heat absorption or heat evolution.

Rule 7: The fire endurance of asymmetrical constructions depends on the direction of heat flow.

This rule is a consequence of Rules 4 and 6 as well as other factors. This rule is useful in determining the relative protection of corridors and stairwells from the surrounding spaces. In addition, there are often situations where a fire is more likely, or potentially more severe, from one side or the other.

Rule 8: The presence of moisture, if it does not result in explosive spalling, increases the fire endurance.

The flow of heat into an assembly is greatly hindered by the release and evaporation of the moisture found within cementitious materials such as gypsum, portland cement, or magnesium oxychloride. Harmathy has shown that the gain in fire endurance may be as high as 8 percent for each percent (by volume) of moisture in the construction. It is the moisture chemically bound within the construction material at the time of manufacture or processing that leads to increased fire endurance. There is no direct relationship between the relative humidity of the air in the pores of the material and the increase in fire endurance.

Under certain conditions there may be explosive spalling of low permeability cementitious materials such as dense concrete. In general, one can assume that extremely old concrete has developed enough minor cracking that this factor should not be significant.

Rule 9: Load-supporting elements, such as beams, girders and joists, yield higher fire endurances when subjected to fire endurance tests as parts of floor, roof, or ceiling assemblies than they would when tested separately.

One of the fire endurance test criteria is the ability of a load-supporting element to carry its design load. The element will be deemed to have failed when the load can no longer be supported.

Failure usually results for two reasons. Some materials, particularly steel and other metals, lose much of their structural strength at elevated temperatures. Physical deflection of the supporting element, due to decreased strength or thermal expansion, causes a redistribution of the load forces and stresses throughout the element. Structural failure often results because the supporting element is not designed to carry the redistributed load.

Roof, floor, and ceiling assemblies have primary (e.g., beams) and secondary (e.g., floor joists) structural members. Since the primary load-supporting elements span the largest distances, their deflection becomes significant at a stage when the strength of the secondary members (including the roof or floor surface) is hardly affected by the heat. As the secondary members follow the deflection of the primary load-supporting element, an increasingly larger portion of the load is transferred to the secondary members.

When load-supporting elements are tested separately, the imposed load is constant and equal to the design load throughout the test. By definition, no distribution of the load is possible because the element is being tested by itself. Without any other structural members to which the load could be transferred, the individual elements cannot yield a higher fire endurance than they do when tested as parts of a floor, roof or ceiling assembly.

Rule 10: The load-supporting elements (beams, girders, joists, etc.) of a floor, roof, or ceiling assembly can be replaced by such other load-supporting elements which, when tested separately, yielded fire endurances not less than that of the assembly.

This rule depends on Rule 9 for its validity. A beam or girder, if capable of yielding a certain performance when tested separately, will yield an equally good or better performance when it forms a part of a floor, roof, or ceiling assembly. It must be emphasized that the supporting element of one assembly must not be replaced by the supporting element of another assembly if the performance of this latter element is not known from a separate (beam) test. Because of the load-reducing effect of the secondary elements that results from a test performed on an assembly, the performance of the supporting element alone cannot be evaluated by simple arithmetic. This rule also indicates the advantage of performing separate fire tests on primary load-supporting elements.

ILLUSTRATION OF HARMATHY'S RULES

Harmathy provided one schematic figure which illustrated his Rules.* It should be useful as a quick reference to assist in applying his Rules.

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* Reproduced from the May 1065 *Fire Technology* (Vol. 1, No. 2). Copyright National Fire Protection Association, Boston. Reproduced by permission.
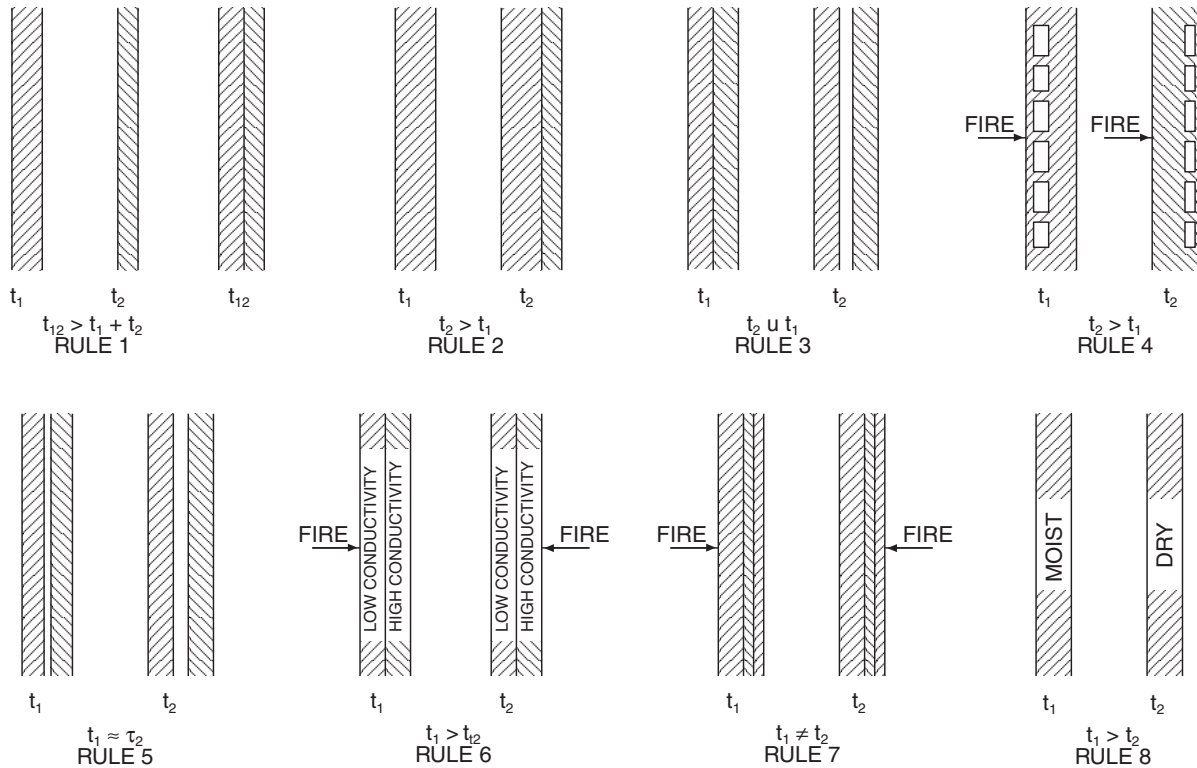
Diagrammatic illustration of ten rules.
t = fire endurance

EXAMPLE APPLICATION OF HARMATHY'S RULES

The following examples, based in whole or in part upon those presented in Harmathy's paper (35), show how the Rules can be applied to practical cases.

Example 1

Problem

A contractor would like to keep a partition which consists of a $3^3/_4$-inch (95 mm) thick layer of red clay brick, a $1^1/_4$-inch (32 mm) thick layer of plywood, and a $^3/_8$ inch (9.5 mm) thick layer of gypsum wallboard, at a location where 2-hour fire endurance is required. Is this assembly capable of providing a 2-hour protection?

Solution

(1) This partition does not appear in the Appendix Tables.

(2) Bricks of this thickness yield fire endurances of approximately 75 minutes (Table 1.1.2, Item W-4-M-2).

(3) The $1^1/_4$-inch (32 mm) thick plywood has a finish rating of 30 minutes.

(4) The $^3/_8$-inch (9.5 mm) gypsum wallboard has a finish rating of 10 minutes.

(5) Using the recommended values from the tables and applying Rule 1, the fire endurance (FI) of the assembly is larger than the sum of the individual layers, or

$$FI > 75 + 30 + 10 = 115 \text{ minutes}$$

Discussion

This example illustrates how the Appendix Tables can be utilized to determine the fire resistance of assemblies not explicitly listed.

Example 2

Problem

(1) A number of buildings to be rehabilitated have the same type of roof slab which is supported with different structural elements.

(2) The designer and contractor would like to determine whether or not this roof slab is capable of yielding a 2-hour fire endurance. According to a rigorous interpretation of ASTM E 119, however, only the roof assembly, including the roof slab as well as the cover and the supporting elements, can be subjected to a fire test. Therefore, a fire endurance classification cannot be issued for the slabs separately.

(3) The designer and contractor believe this slab will yield a 2-hour fire endurance even without the cover, and any beam of at least 2-hour fire endurance will provide satisfactory support. Is it possible to obtain a classification for the slab separately?

Solution

(1) The answer to the question is yes.

(2) According to Rule 10 it is not contrary to common sense to test and classify roofs and supporting elements separately. Furthermore, according to Rule 2, if the roof slabs actually yield a 2 hour fire endurance, the endurance of an assembly, including the slabs, cannot be less than 2 hours.

(3) The recommended procedure would be to review the tables to see if the slab appears as part of any tested roof or floor/ceiling assembly. The supporting system can be regarded as separate from the slab specimen, and the fire endurance of the assembly listed in the table is at least the fire endurance of the slab. There would have to be an adjustment for the weight of the roof cover in the allowable load if the test specimen did not contain a cover.

(4) The supporting structure or element would have to have at least a 2-hour fire endurance when tested separately.

Discussion

If the tables did not include tests on assemblies which contained the slab, one procedure would be to assemble the roof slabs on any convenient supporting system (not regarded as part of the specimen) and to subject them to a load which, besides the usually required superimposed load, includes some allowances for the weight of the cover.

Example 3

Problem

A steel-joisted floor and ceiling assembly is known to have yielded a fire endurance of 1 hour and 35 minutes. At a certain location, a 2-hour endurance is required. What is the most economical way of increasing the fire endurance by at least 25 minutes?

Solution

(1) The most effective technique would be to increase the ceiling plaster thickness. Existing coats of paint would have to be removed and the surface properly prepared before the new plaster could be applied. Other materials (e.g., gypsum wallboard) could also be considered.

(2) There may be other techniques based on other principles, but an examination of the drawings would be necessary.

Discussion

(1) The additional plaster has at least three effects:

   a) The layer of plaster is increased and thus there is a gain of fire endurance (Rule 1).

   b) There is a gain due to shifting the air gap farther from the exposed surface (Rule 4).

   c) There is more moisture in the path of heat flow to the structural elements (Rules 7 and 8).

(2) The increase in fire endurance would be at least as large as that of the finish rating for the added thickness of plaster. The combined effects in (1) above would further increase this by a factor of 2 or more, depending upon the geometry of the assembly.

Example 4

Problem

The fire endurance of item W-l0-M-l in Table 1.1.5 is 4 hours. This wall consists of two $3^3/_4$-inch (95 mm) thick layers of structural tiles separated by a 2-inch (51 mm) air gap and $3/_4$-inch (19 mm) portland cement plaster or stucco on both sides. If the actual wall in the building is identical to item W-10-M-1 except that it has a 4-inch (102 mm) air gap, can the fire endurance be estimated at 5 hours?

Solution

The answer to the question is no for the reasons contained in Rule 5.

Example 5

Problem

In order to increase the insulating value of its precast roof slabs, a company has decided to use two layers of different concretes. The lower layer of the slabs, where the strength of the concrete is immaterial (all the tensile load is carried by the steel reinforcement), would be made with a concrete of low strength but good insulating value. The upper layer, where the concrete is supposed to carry the compressive load, would remain the original high strength, high thermal conductivity concrete. How will the fire endurance of the slabs be affected by the change?

Solution

The effect on the thermal fire endurance is beneficial:

(1) The total resistance to heat flow of the new slabs has been increased due to the replacement of a layer of high thermal conductivity by one of low conductivity.

(2) The layer of low conductivity is on the side more likely to be exposed to fire, where it is more effectively utilized according to Rule 6. The layer of low thermal conductivity also provides better protection for the steel reinforcement, thereby extending the time before reaching the temperature at which the creep of steel becomes significant.

3.3
"THICKNESS DESIGN" STRATEGY

The "thickness design" strategy is based upon Harmathy's Rules 1 and 2. This design approach can be used when the construction materials have been identified and measured, but the specific assembly cannot be located within the tables. The

tables should be surveyed again for thinner walls of like material and construction detail that have yielded the desired or greater fire endurance. If such an assembly can be found, then the thicker walls in the building have more than enough fire resistance. The thickness of the walls thus becomes the principal concern.

This approach can also be used for floor/ceiling assemblies, except that the thickness of the cover* and the slab become the central concern. The fire resistance of the untested assembly will be at least the fire resistance of an assembly listed in the table having a similar design but with less cover and/or thinner slabs. For other structural elements (e.g., beams and columns), the element listed in the table must also be of a similar design but with less cover thickness.

3.4
EVALUATION OF DOORS

A separate section on doors has been included because the process for evaluation presented below differs from those suggested previously for other building elements. The impact of unprotected openings or penetrations in fire resistant assemblies has been detailed in Part 2.3 above. It is sufficient to note here that openings left unprotected will likely lead to failure of the barrier under actual fire conditions.

For other types of building elements (e.g., beams, columns), the Appendix Tables can be used to establish a minimum level of fire performance. The benefit to rehabilitation is that the need for a full-scale fire test is then eliminated. For doors, however, this cannot be done. The data contained in Appendix Table 5.1, Resistance of Doors to Fire Exposure, can only provide guidance as to whether a successful fire test is even feasible.

For example, a door required to have 1 hour fire resistance is noted in the tables as providing only 5 minutes. The likelihood of achieving the required 1 hour, even if the door is upgraded, is remote. The ultimate need for replacement of the doors is reasonably clear, and the expense and time needed for testing can be saved. However, if the performance documented in the table is near or in excess of what is being required, then a fire test should be conducted. The test documentation can then be used as evidence of compliance with the required level of performance.

The table entries cannot be used as the sole proof of performance of the door in question because there are too many unknown variables which could measurably affect fire performance. The wood may have dried over the years; coats of flammable varnish could have been added. Minor deviations in the internal construction of a door can result in significant differences in performance. Methods of securing inserts in panel doors can vary. The major non-destructive method of analysis, an x-ray, often cannot provide the necessary detail. It is for these, and similar reasons, that a fire test is still felt to be necessary.

It is often possible to upgrade the fire performance of an existing door. Sometimes, "as is" and modified doors are evaluated in a single series of tests when failure of the unmodified door is expected. Because doors upgraded after an initial failure must be tested again, there is a potential savings of time and money.

The most common problems encountered are plain glass, panel inserts of insufficient thickness, and improper fit of a door in its frame. The latter problem can be significant because a fire can develop a substantial positive pressure, and the fire will work its way through otherwise innocent-looking gaps between door and frame.

One approach to solving these problems is as follows. The plain glass is replaced with approved or listed wire glass in a steel frame. The panel inserts can be upgraded by adding an additional layer of material. Gypsum wallboard is often used for this purpose. Intumescent paint applied to the edges of the door and frame will expand when exposed to fire, forming an effective seal around the edges. This seal, coupled with the generally even thermal expansion of a wood door in a wood frame, can prevent the passage of flames and other fire gases. Figure 3 below illustrates these solutions.

Because the interior construction of a door cannot be determined by a visual inspection, there is no absolute guarantee that the remaining doors are identical to the one(s) removed from the building and tested. But the same is true for doors constructed today, and reason and judgment must be applied. Doors that appear identical upon visual inspection can be weighed. If the weights are reasonably close, the doors can be assumed to be identical and therefore provide the same level of fire performance. Another approach is to fire test more than one door or to dismantle doors selected at random to see if they had been constructed in the same manner. Original building plans showing door details or other records showing that doors were purchased at one time or obtained from a single supplier can also be evidence of similar construction.

More often though, it is what is visible to the eye that is most significant. The investigator should carefully check the condition and fit of the door and frame, and for frames out of plumb or separating from the wall. Door closers, latches, and hinges must be examined to see that they function properly and are tightly secured. If these are in order and the door and frame have passed a full-scale test, there can be a reasonable basis for allowing the existing doors to remain.

4
SUMMARY

This section summarizes the various approaches and design solutions discussed in the preceding sections of the guideline. The term "structural system" includes: frames, beams, columns, and other structural elements. "Cover" is a protective layer(s) of materials or membrane which slows the flow of heat to the structural elements. It cannot be stressed too strongly that the fire endurance of actual building elements can be greatly reduced or totally negated by removing part of the cover to allow pipes, ducts, or conduits to pass through the element. This must be repaired in the rehabilitation process.
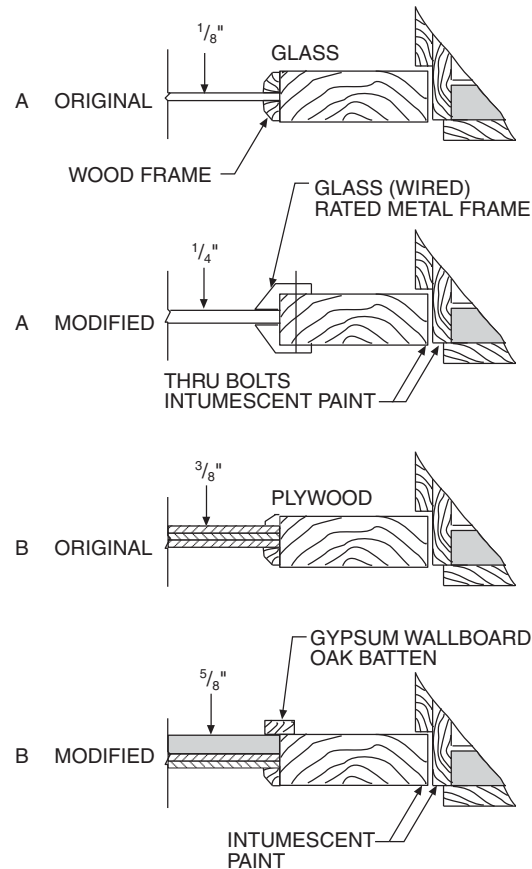
The following approaches shall be considered equivalent.

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* Cover: the protective layer or membrane of material which slows the flow of heat to the structural elements.
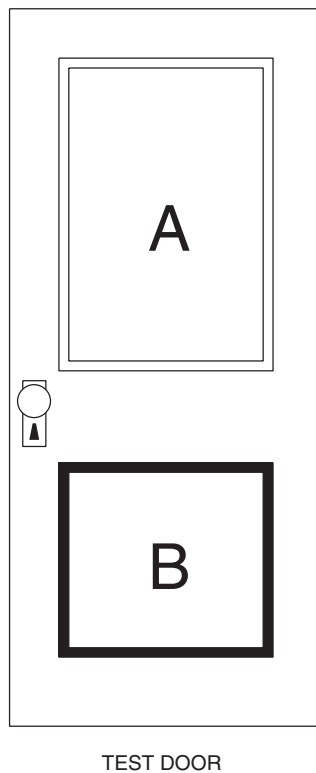
FIGURE 3   **MODIFICATION DETAILS**

TEST DOOR

4.1 The fire resistance of a building element can be established from the Appendix Tables. This is subject to the following limitations:

> The building element in the rehabilitated building shall be constructed of the same materials with the same nominal dimensions as stated in the tables.

> All penetrations in the building element or its cover for services such as electricity, plumbing, and HVAC shall be packed with noncombustible cementitious materials and so fixed that the packing material will not fall out when it loses its water of hydration.

The effects of age and wear and tear shall be repaired so that the building element is sound and the original thickness of all components, particularly covers and floor slabs, is maintained.

This approach essentially follows the approach taken by model building codes. The assembly must appear in a table either published in or accepted by the code for a given fire resistance rating to be recognized and accepted.

4.2 The fire resistance of a building element which does not explicitly appear in the Appendix Tables can be established if one or more elements of same design but different dimensions have been listed in the tables. For walls, the existing element must be thicker than the one listed. For floor/ceiling assemblies, the assembly listed in the table must have the same or less cover and the same or thinner slab constructed of the same material as the actual floor/ceiling assembly. For other struc-

tural elements, the element listed in the table must be of a similar design but with less cover thickness. The fire resistance in all instances shall be the fire resistance recommended in the table. This is subject to the following limitations:

> The actual element in the rehabilitated building shall be constructed of the same materials as listed in the table. Only the following dimensions may vary from those specified: for walls, the overall thickness must exceed that specified in the table; for floor/ceiling assemblies, the thickness of the cover and the slab must be greater than, or equal to, that specified in the table; for other structural elements, the thickness of the cover must be greater than that specified in the table.

> All penetrations in the building element or its cover for services such as electricity, plumbing, or HVAC shall be packed with noncombustible cementitious materials and so fixed that the packing material will not fall out when it loses its water of hydration.

> The effects of age and wear and tear shall be repaired so that the building element is sound and the original thickness of all components, particularly covers and floor slabs, is maintained.

This approach is an application of the "thickness design" concept presented in Part 3.3 of the guideline. There should be many instances when a thicker building element was utilized than the one listed in the Appendix Tables. This guideline rec-

ognizes the inherent superiority of a thicker design. Note: "thickness design" for floor/ceiling assemblies and structural elements refers to cover and slab thickness rather than total thickness.

The "thickness design" concept is essentially a special case of Harmathy's Rules (specifically Rules 1 and 2). It should be recognized that the only source of data is the Appendix Tables. If other data are used, it must be in connection with the approach below.

4.3 The fire resistance of building elements can be established by applying Harmathy's Ten Rules of Fire Resistance Ratings as set forth in Part 3.2 of the guideline. This is subject to the following limitations:

> The data from the tables can be utilized subject to the limitations in 4.2 above.

> Test reports from recognized journals or published papers can be used to support data utilized in applying Harmathy's Rules.

> Calculations utilizing recognized and well established computational techniques can be used in applying Harmathy's Rules. These include, but are not limited to, analysis of heat flow, mechanical properties, deflections, and load bearing capacity.