
BBS MEMO

Ohio Board of Building Standards

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BUILDING SERVICE EQUIPMENT PLATFORMS VERSUS MEZZANINES

It has been brought to the board's attention that some building departments have been incorrectly applying provisions of the code intended for mezzanines when reviewing plans for platforms used specifically for building service equipment.

A platform located in the space between a floor and ceiling or in an interstitial space or cavity of a building such as an attic, designed and sized to support the building service equipment itself, and the personnel who service it on an occasional basis, should not be considered as an occupied or habitable space.

The important threshold to determine is whether or not the space is actually used as a work station or just an area where the equipment is located with space sufficient to access and service the equipment. Even a mezzanine/space used exclusively for storage would not qualify as occupiable or habitable based on the code's intent (see BOCA interpretation # 26/201/77).

Although there is no definition for building service equipment platform in the current code, the intent has not changed. To help clarify, subsequent editions of the code have added new text. The 1999 BOCA National Building Code had added a new section to Chapter 28, Mechanical Systems, entitled "Equipment Platforms". These platforms are defined as: *"An unoccupied elevated platform used exclusively for building mechanical systems or industrial process equipment. An equipment platform shall include the associated walkways, stairs, and ladders accessing the platform."* The 2000 IBC continues this clarification with a section specifically covering Industrial Equipment Platforms, section 505.5.

Several factors, which help define platforms, are:

1. Limited level of activity is clearly an important factor in distinguishing occupiable mezzanines from equipment platforms,
2. An exclusive purpose, that of providing access to equipment for service, observation, inspection, repair, or adjustment and
3. The walkways, stairs and ladders providing access to the platform do not serve as part of the means of egress from the building.

The key difference to remember is that mezzanines are considered as occupied spaces and equipment platforms, by their very nature, are not.

The applicable provisions for space and access related to equipment platforms are found in section 306 of Ohio's Mechanical Code.

With these guidelines, each building department should be able to clearly distinguish between a mezzanine and an unoccupied building service equipment platform.