



INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

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Chief Building Official

MECHANICAL VENT AND EXHAUST TERMINATIONS PROHIBITION AT ZERO LOT LINES, YARD EASEMENTS AND EXCLUSIVE COMMON ELEMENTS

Reference: California Building Code (CBC) section 705.8 and California Residential Code (CRC) section R302 and California Mechanical Code (CMC) sections 502.2.1 and 802.8

Introduction: Common development schemes throughout the City may result in one resident's yard being bounded by the exterior wall of an adjoining resident's home. Such cases typically follow three scenarios. In scenario one, the exterior wall of the home is on the property line, i.e. a "zero" lot line. In scenario two, the exterior wall is set back from the true property line and the yard between the wall and the property line is an easement for the use and enjoyment of the adjacent property, i.e. a yard easement. In scenario three, two or more detached condominiums may be on a single property with no property line separating units. In such a case, a yard for the exclusive use of one unit may be bounded by the exterior wall of another unit, i.e. an exclusive common element. Typically Home Owner Association (HOA) Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) limit what can be placed in such a yard or easement or exclusive common element to landscaping and flatwork. Homeowners are advised to check with their HOAs before making any improvements in these areas.

Mechanical appliance vents and exhausts, for example from a direct-vented tankless water heater or a bathroom, kitchen or clothes dryer exhaust duct are prohibited by the CBC, CRC and the CMC from occurring in walls on a property line (scenario one). The codes does not contemplate scenarios two or three, however, the code intent is clear that vents and exhausts from one home are not to impact the yard of another.

Purpose: The purpose of this informational bulletin is to **prohibit vent and exhaust terminations at such easements and exclusive common elements** and to raise awareness of this issue at the design stage of a project so that mechanical appliances and their vents and exhausts may be planned for in the most favorable manner. Be advised, plans for smaller residential projects such as single family homes, detached condominiums, duplexes, remodels of or additions to an existing residence are not reviewed for plumbing, electrical and mechanical code compliance during plan check.

This is because such designs are simple and subject to very basic prescriptive requirements which are verified by the City inspector as the work progresses. Therefore, to avoid potential redesign or rework during construction, it is very important to understand and account for this prohibition at the earliest stages of design.