

(Effective until March 15, 2024)

WAC 51-11C-40241 Section C402.5.1—Air barriers.

C402.5.1 Air barriers. A continuous air barrier shall be provided throughout the building thermal envelope. The air barriers shall be permitted to be located on the inside or outside of the building envelope, located within the assemblies composing the envelope, or any combination thereof. The air barrier shall comply with Sections C402.5.1.1 and C402.5.1.2.

C402.5.1.1 Air barrier construction. The *continuous air barrier* shall be constructed to comply with the following:

1. The air barrier shall be continuous for all assemblies that are the thermal envelope of the building and across the joints and assemblies.

2. Air barrier joints and seams shall be sealed, including sealing transitions in places and changes in materials. The joints and seals shall be securely installed in or on the joint for its entire length so as not to dislodge, loosen or otherwise impair its ability to resist positive and negative pressure from wind, stack effect and mechanical ventilation.

3. Penetrations of the air barrier shall be caulked, gasketed or otherwise sealed in a manner compatible with the construction materials and location. Sealing shall allow for expansion, contraction and mechanical vibration. Joints and seams associated with penetrations shall be sealed in the same manner or taped. Sealing materials shall be securely installed around the penetration so as not to dislodge, loosen or otherwise impair the penetrations' ability to resist positive and negative pressure from wind, stack effect, and mechanical ventilation. Sealing of concealed fire sprinklers, where required, shall be in a manner that is recommended by the manufacturer. Caulking or other adhesive sealants shall not be used to fill voids between fire sprinkler cover plates and walls or ceilings.

4. Recessed lighting fixtures shall comply with Section C402.5.8. Where similar objects are installed which penetrate the air barrier, provisions shall be made to maintain the integrity of the air barrier.

5. Construction documents shall contain a diagram showing the building's pressure boundary in plan(s) and section(s) and a calculation of the area of the pressure boundary to be considered in the test.

C402.5.1.2 Building test. The completed building shall be tested and the air leakage rate of the *building envelope* shall not exceed 0.25 cfm/ft² at a pressure differential of 0.3 inches water gauge (2.0 L/s • m² at 75 Pa) at the upper 95 percent confidence interval in accordance with ASTM E 779 or an equivalent method approved by the code official. A report that includes the tested surface area, floor area, air by volume, stories above grade, and leakage rates shall be submitted to the building owner and the Code Official. If the tested rate exceeds that defined here by up to 0.15 cfm/ft², a visual inspection of the air barrier shall be conducted and any leaks noted shall be sealed to the extent practicable. An additional report identifying the corrective actions taken to seal air leaks shall be submitted to the building owner and the Code Official and any further requirement to meet the leakage air rate will be waived. If the tested rate exceeds

0.40 cfm/ft², corrective actions must be made and the test completed again. A test above 0.40 cfm/ft² will not be accepted.

1. Test shall be accomplished using either (1) both pressurization and depressurization or (2) pressurization alone, but not depressurization alone. The test results shall be plotted against the corrected P in accordance with Section 9.4 of ASTM E 779.

2. The test pressure range shall be from 25 Pa to 80 Pa per Section 8.10 of ASTM E 779, but the upper limit shall not be less than 50 Pa, and the difference between the upper and lower limit shall not be less than 25 Pa.

3. If the pressure exponent n is less than 0.45 or greater than 0.85 per Section 9.6.4 of ASTM E 779, the test shall be rerun with additional readings over a longer time interval.

C402.5.1.2.1 Building test for mixed-use buildings. Where a building is three or fewer stories above grade plane and contains both commercial and residential uses, the air barrier of the R-2 and R-3 occupancy areas of the building is permitted to be separately tested according to Section R402.4.1.2. Alternatively, it is permissible to test the air barrier of the entire building according to Section C402.5.1.2, provided that the tested air leakage rate does not exceed the rate specified in Section C402.5.1.2.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.020, 19.27A.025, 19.27A.160 and chapter 19.27 RCW. WSR 19-24-040, § 51-11C-40241, filed 11/26/19, effective 7/1/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.025, 19.27A.160, and 19.27.074. WSR 16-03-072, § 51-11C-40241, filed 1/19/16, effective 7/1/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.020, 19.27A.025 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 13-04-056, § 51-11C-40241, filed 2/1/13, effective 7/1/13.]

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1. The air barrier shall be continuous for all assemblies that are the thermal envelope of the building and across the joints and assemblies.

2. Air barrier joints and seams shall be sealed, including sealing transitions in places and changes in materials. The joints and seals shall be securely installed in or on the joint for its entire length so as not to dislodge, loosen or otherwise impair its ability to resist positive and negative pressure from wind, stack effect and mechanical ventilation.

3. Penetrations of the air barrier shall be caulked, gasketed or otherwise sealed in a manner compatible with the construction materials and location. Sealing shall allow for expansion, contraction and mechanical vibration. Joints and seams associated with penetrations

shall be sealed in the same manner or taped. Sealing materials shall be securely installed around the penetration so as not to dislodge, loosen or otherwise impair the penetrations' ability to resist positive and negative pressure from wind, stack effect, and mechanical ventilation. Sealing of concealed fire sprinklers, where required, shall be in a manner that is recommended by the manufacturer. Caulking or other adhesive sealants shall not be used to fill voids between fire sprinkler cover plates and walls or ceilings.

4. Recessed lighting fixtures shall comply with Section C402.5.8. Where similar objects are installed which penetrate the air barrier, provisions shall be made to maintain the integrity of the air barrier.

5. Construction documents shall contain a diagram showing the building's pressure boundary in plan(s) and section(s) and a calculation of the area of the pressure boundary to be considered in the test.

C402.5.1.2 Air barrier compliance. A continuous air barrier for the opaque building envelope shall comply with the following:

1. Group R dwelling units that are accessed directly from the outdoors shall meet the provisions of Section C402.5.2.

2. All other buildings or portions of buildings shall meet the provisions of Section C402.5.3.

C402.5.2 Enclosure testing for dwelling and sleeping unit accessed directly from the outdoors. For dwelling units accessed directly from outdoors, the *building thermal envelope* shall be tested in accordance with ASTM E779, ANSI/RESNET/ICC 380, ASTM E1827 or an equivalent method approved by the *code official*. The measured air leakage shall not exceed 0.25 cfm/ft² (1.27 L/s m²) of the *testing unit enclosure area* at a pressure differential of 0.2 inch water gauge (50 Pa). Where multiple dwelling units or sleeping units or other occupiable conditioned spaces are contained within one *building thermal envelope* and are accessed directly from the outdoors, each unit shall be considered an individual testing unit, and the building air leakage shall be the weighted average of all testing unit results, weighted by each testing unit's enclosure area. Units shall be tested separately with an unguarded blower door test as follows:

1. Where buildings have fewer than eight testing units, each testing unit shall be tested.

2. For buildings with eight or more testing units, the greater of seven units or 20 percent of the testing units in the building shall be tested, including a top floor unit, a ground floor unit and a unit with the largest *testing unit enclosure area*. For each tested unit that exceeds the maximum air leakage rate, an additional two units shall be tested, including a mixture of testing unit types and locations.

3. Test shall be accomplished using either a) both pressurization and depressurization or b) pressurization alone, but not depressurization alone. The test results shall be plotted against the correct P for pressurization in accordance with Section 9.4 of ASTM E779.

Where the measured air leakage rate exceeds 0.25 cfm/ft² (2.0 L/s x m²) corrective action shall be taken to seal leaks in the air barrier in all units exceeding the target value and all untested units. Post-corrective action testing and repeated corrective action measures will be taken until the required air leakage rating is achieved. Final passing air leakage test results shall be submitted to the *code official*.

C402.5.3 Building thermal envelope testing. The *building thermal envelope* shall be tested in accordance with ASTM E779, ANSI/RESNET/ICC 380, ASTM E3158 or ASTM E1827 or an equivalent method approved by the code official. The measured air leakage shall not exceed 0.25 cfm/ft² (1.27 L/s × m²) of the *building thermal envelope* area at a pressure differential of 0.3 inch water gauge (75 Pa). Alternatively, portions of the building shall be tested and the measured air leakages shall be area weighted by the surface areas of the building envelope in each portion. The weighted average test results shall not exceed the whole building leakage limit. In the alternative approach, the following portions of the building shall be tested:

1. The entire envelope area of all stories that have any spaces directly under a roof.

2. The entire envelope area of all stories that have a building entrance, exposed floor, or loading dock, or are below grade.

3. Representative above-grade sections of the building totaling at least 25 percent of the wall area enclosing the remaining conditioned space.

4. Test shall be accomplished using either a) both pressurization and depressurization or b) pressurization alone, but not depressurization alone. The test results shall be plotted against the correct P for pressurization in accordance with Section 9.4 of ASTM E779.

Where the measured air leakage rate exceeds 0.25 cfm/ft² (2.0 L/s × m²) corrective action shall be taken to seal leaks in the air barrier. Post-corrective action testing and repeated corrective action measures will be taken until the required air leakage rating is achieved. Final passing of the air leakage test results shall be submitted to the *code official*.

C402.5.4 Building test for mixed-use buildings. Where a building is three or fewer stories above grade plane and contains both commercial and residential uses, the air barrier of the R-2 and R-3 occupancy areas of the building is permitted to be separately tested according to Section R402.4.1.2. Alternatively, it is permissible to test the air barrier of the entire building according to Section C402.5.3, provided that the tested air leakage rate does not exceed the rate specified in Section C402.5.3.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.020, 19.27A.025, 19.27A.160 and chapters 19.27A and 19.27 RCW. WSR 22-14-091, 23-12-101, and 23-20-021, § 51-11C-40241, filed 7/1/22, 6/7/23, and 9/25/23, effective 3/15/24. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.020, 19.27A.025, 19.27A.160 and chapter 19.27 RCW. WSR 19-24-040, § 51-11C-40241, filed 11/26/19, effective 7/1/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.025, 19.27A.160, and 19.27.074. WSR 16-03-072, § 51-11C-40241, filed 1/19/16, effective 7/1/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27A.020, 19.27A.025 and chapters 19.27 and 34.05 RCW. WSR 13-04-056, § 51-11C-40241, filed 2/1/13, effective 7/1/13.]