



## ICC ORANGE EMPIRE CHAPTER CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

### **QUESTION AND CODE SECTION:**

2007 California Building Code – Section 2304.11 contains provisions for protection of wood framing against decay and termites. These provisions seem to indicate that an increased separation between wood and exposed earth is needed as compared to the previous 2001 California Building Code.

Please provide interpretation and clarification of the application of the code requirements related to the 8-inch wood-to-earth separation specified in Section 2304.11.2.2 – Wood supported by exterior foundation walls.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The 2007 California Building Code – Section 2304.11.2.2 indicates that wood “resting” on exterior foundation walls shall be naturally durable or preservative-treated wood when located less than 8 inches from exposed earth. Previous editions of the code required a 6-inch separation.

The International Code Council (ICC) publication – *2006 International Building Code Commentary – Figure 2304.11.2.1 (see attached figure)* illustrates the foundation sill plate separated from the exposed earth by 8 inches.

The 8-inch separation to the bottom of the sill plate is not necessary when a preservative-treated sill plate is used. This IBC requirement is intended to address problems associated with moisture and termites entering the structure at the foundation. Since the Orange County does not experience accumulation of snow around buildings and there is no history of severe cases of subterranean termites that enter structures at the foundation, neither of these conditions is particularly problematic. Southern California’s dry climate minimizes the exterior wall moisture problems and drywood termites (rather than subterranean termites) tend to be the predominant termite species do not create their damage to structures through contact with the soil.

### **INTERPRETATION:**

Since the exterior wall sill plate is of pressure-treated material the 8-inch separation from bottom of sill plate to exposed earth is unnecessary. Providing 6-inch separation between the bottom of the sill plate and the exposed earth provides 8-inch (nominal) separation to the remaining wood framing resting on the sill plate and allows the remaining wood to be untreated.

In areas with subterranean termites, the 8-inch separation to bottom of sill plate should be utilized.

Where wood siding is utilized with less than 6-inch separation to exposed earth the siding, exterior wall sheathing and wall framing shall be of naturally durable or treated wood.

Attached figures 1 through 4 illustrate the proposed application of 2007 California Building Code – Sections 2304.11.2.2 and 2304.11.2.6

**DATE OF CHAPTER MEMBERS' APPROVAL:        June 19, 2008**