

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN

NO. AB-057	:	
DATE	:	July 19, 2004 (Updated 01/01/14 for code references.)
SUBJECT	:	Plan Review and Permit Process
TITLE	:	Local Equivalency for Approval of Roof Hatches in Lieu of Stairway Penthouses in Designated Buildings

PURPOSE	:	The purpose of this Administrative Bulletin is to provide standards and procedures for the application, case-by-case review and approval of requests for a modification based on Local Equivalency to allow the use of roof hatches as alternates to stairway penthouses in R-3 buildings where the stairway access to the roof does not strictly comply with the provisions of Section 1009.16 of the San Francisco Building Code.
REFERENCE	:	2013 San Francisco Building Code <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Section 104A.2.1, General, rules and regulations- Section 104A.2.7, Modifications- Section 104A.2.8, Alternate materials, alternate design and methods of construction- Section 705.5 and Tables 601 and 602, Fire Resistance of Walls- Section 705.11, Parapets- Section 1009, Stairways- Section 1009.16, Stairway to roof
DISCUSSION	:	The installation of roof penthouses throughout the City is an issue of serious concern to the public and the Planning Department inasmuch as such penthouses may expand structures to larger than may be compatible with surrounding structures and may block sunlight and views. Roof penthouses are often a basis of extensive Planning and Building Department review, permit appeals and reconsideration during construction. The use of roof hatches in lieu of stair penthouses under certain conditions can do much to resolve the problems related to roof penthouses, could permit rapid processing and issuance, and, if installed in accordance with the following conditions, would not impair the code-mandated suitability, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, safety or sanitation of the standard method of roof access.

This bulletin does not apply to buildings under the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Fire Department, although requests to apply alternates and equivalencies to the regular code will be considered by the Fire Department on a case-by-case basis.

The use of roof hatches under this Administrative Bulletin is limited to the following applications:

1. Where proposed roof hatches provide access to the roof of buildings under the jurisdiction of the Department of Building Inspection, and
2. Where a stairway to the roof is either required by code or voluntarily proposed, and

3. Where the roof hatch and its appurtenances are approved and constructed as detailed below, and
4. When the roof hatch is served by a stairway.

Other applications for roof hatches in lieu of required fully complying stairways will be considered on a case-by-case basis under the review and approval procedures in the California Building Code regarding "Modifications" and "Alternative materials, alternate designs and methods of construction."

Note: Under Section 1009.16.1, Exception: In buildings without an occupied roof, access to the roof shall be permitted to be a roof hatch or trap door not less than 16 square feet in area and having a minimum dimension of 2 feet.

Procedure for Application of Local Equivalency

Project sponsors wishing to apply Local Equivalencies must fill out and submit the request for Approval of Local Equivalencies on a standard form (Attachment A). Fees to be paid and scheduling of review of requests are as noted on that form. Following Department of Building Inspection and, as appropriate, other agency review, each request will be approved, approved with conditions, disapproved, or placed on "Hold" pending submittal of additional information.

Further details of procedures for the review of Local Equivalencies and appeal of departmental determinations may be found in AB-005, Request for Approval of Local Equivalencies.

Conditions of Local Equivalency

Roof hatches in lieu of stairway penthouses may be permitted when the following approved equivalent provisions are met. This Local Equivalency allows roof hatches to be used in lieu of stairway penthouses and for such roof hatch to be considered as meeting the code requirements for a stairway to the roof if the below listed standard provisions are met:

1. Applicant shall submit drawings showing details of the proposed roof hatch, stairway, stair handrail, and other details as needed to demonstrate compliance, insofar as is practical, with the stairway requirements of the San Francisco Building Code. Submittal documents shall include a plan view showing the location of the roof hatch and stairway and shall include sections and/or elevations detailing the proposed installation.
2. Stairways shall have handrails on at least one side. At least one handrail shall extend at least 34 inches above the roof surface. Such handrail may be attached to the underside of the operable hatch so that it is in the correct position for handrails when the hatch is in the open position, or it may be secured to the roof or other construction. Minor breaks in the continuity of the handrail are permitted; handrail sections must be generally aligned.
3. If the opening for the stairway to the roof is within the distance where protection of openings is required, then parapets extending along the parapet wall at least the length of the opening shall be provided per Section 705.11.
4. The curb at the roof opening for the roof hatch on the side where the stairs emerge from the interior shall extend above the roof surface no more than nine inches, the curb at the roof hatch on other sides of the hatch shall not exceed 24 inches above the roof surface, and the maximum height of any portion of the hatch in a closed position shall not exceed 36 inches above the roof surface.
5. The rise and run of stairs to the roof shall meet regular code requirements.
6. The width of a stairway to a roof and the clear width of a roof hatch in its open position shall be not less than 30 inches, except that when serving an occupied roof with an occupant load of 10 or more or serving an occupied roof area greater than 400 square feet the width shall meet the specific requirements of the San Francisco Building Code. Handrails, lifting mechanisms and other equipment may encroach into the required width up to 1 1/2" when the roof hatch is in a fully open position.
7. When the roof hatch serves an occupied roof, the hatch latching mechanism shall be operable from the exterior.

A permit application and related submittal documents shall detail all construction that is approved as a result of this Request for Approval of Local Equivalency. No work to install roof hatches in lieu of stairway penthouses shall be done prior to approval of such Permit Application and issuance of a permit.

Signed By:

Frank Y. Chiu, July 18, 2004
Director
Department of Building Inspection

Approved by the Building Inspection Commission on July 18, 2004

Attachment A: Request for Approval of Local Equivalency

ATTACHMENT A



DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION
City & County of San Francisco
1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, California 94103-2414

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF LOCAL EQUIVALENCY FOR MODIFICATION
 OR ALTERNATE MATERIALS, DESIGN OR METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION**

DATE SUBMITTED _____

[Note: This form shall be recorded as part of
 the permanent construction records of the
 property]

If no permit application has been filed, a Preapplication Review Fee is required for review of a request for local equivalency or modification, per SFBC Table 1A-B, Item 5. Additional fees may be required by Fire Department and other City review agencies.

If a permit application has been filed, no additional fees are required for this review.

Permit Application # _____

Property Address: _____

Block and Lot: ____/____ Occupancy Group: _____ Type of Construction: _____ No. of Stories: _____

Describe Use of Building _____

Under the authority of the 2013 San Francisco Building Code, Sections 104A.2.7 and 104A.2.8; the 2013 San Francisco Mechanical Code, Section 103.0; the 2013 San Francisco Electrical Code, Section 89.117; and the 2013 San Francisco Plumbing Code, Section 301.2; the undersigned requests modifications of the provisions of these codes and/or approval of alternate materials, designs or methods of construction. Two copies of supporting documents, including plans showing the proposed modifications or alternate materials, design or methods of construction, are attached.

Regular Code Requirement (specify Code and Sections)

Proposed Modification or Alternate

Case-by-Case Basis of Request - Describe the practical difficulties presented in meeting the specific conditions of the code and how the proposed modification or alternate meets the intent of the code. A separate form should be filled for each requested modification or alternate. Attach copies of any Administrative Bulletin, Code Ruling, reference, test reports, expert opinions, etc., which support this request. The Department may require that an approved consultant be hired by the applicant to perform tests or analysis and to submit an evaluation report to the Department for consideration.

Requested by:

PROJECT SPONSOR

ARCHITECT/ENGINEER

Print Name:

Signature:

[PROFESSIONAL
STAMP HERE]

Telephone:

PLAN REVIEWER COMMENTS:

RECOMMENDATIONS: [signed off/dated by:]	Approve	Approve with conditions	Disapprove
Plan Reviewer:	_____	_____	_____
Division Manager:	_____	_____	_____
for Director of Bldg. Inspection	_____	_____	_____
for Fire Marshal:	_____	_____	_____

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL or OTHER COMMENTS
