



**Informal Interpretation Report
Number 7356**



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Edition 2010

Section 713.3.2

Question:

Is it the intent of exception 1.1 to classify
steel stud construction with drywall affixed
directly to both sides of the studs as
communicating stud cavities when the studs have a
small gap at the top or bottom or are punched for
the running of electrical systems?

Answer

No.

Commentary:

The typical gap at the top and bottom of steel studs or the small holes punched to allow electrical or other systems to be run through the wall does not create a "communicating cavity". However, the local authority needs to look at the wall while at least one side is open to make certain these gaps and holes are typical and not excessive.

Manufacturer's installation instructions typically specify a specific sized gap at the top of the stud in fire rated

partitions. (e.g. 22mm) Presumably this is to allow

expansion when attacked by fire. However, these materials are subject to cutting in the field and should be inspected to verify compliance with the manufacturer's instructions

While the ICC interpretation specifically states the gaps and openings do not constitute communicating cavities, it is telling that neither the UL code change proposal nor the

UL engineers mention such gaps and openings.

Further information: Manufacturer's Installations may specify a deflection gap at the top of the stud.
Information such as this appears on a detail from the USG Steel Stud Installation Details:

Top Gaps

10 mm standard

15 mm fire rated to 3.6m

22 mm fire rated 3.61-5.4 mm

Notice:

The Building Officials Association of Florida, in cooperation with the Florida Building Commission, the Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation, ICC, and industry and professional experts offer this interpretation of the Florida Building Code in the interest of consistency in their application statewide. This interpretation is informal, non-binding and subject to acceptance and approval by the local building official.