

Guidance for Designers and Contractors: Bath Fan Installation in ADUs

Project Type: Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) below or adjacent to a primary dwelling unit.

Why This Matters:

When an ADU shares a horizontal separation with the main dwelling (e.g. located below it), the California Residential Code (CRC) required a 1-hour fire-resistance-rated floor-ceiling assembly between the units (CRC R302.3). Improper bath fan placement can compromise this rating and delay inspection approval.

Common Mistake:

Designers or contractors install a standard bathroom exhaust fan in or through the rated horizontal assembly without accounting for fire-resistance requirements.

Key Code Reference:

CRC R302.3: Dwelling units (including ADUs) shall be separated by not less than 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction.

Important Notes:

- No UL-listed bathroom exhaust fan exists that is tested as part of a 1-hour fire-rated horizontal assembly.
- Field-built gypsum board boxes do not replicate tested rated assemblies and are not acceptable.

Design Guidance

1. Avoid Penetrating the Rated Ceiling:

- Locate bath fans in soffits or dropped ceilings below the rated assembly.
- Maintain continuity of the 1-hour rated lid above.

2. Exhaust Through Non-Rated Locations

- Exhaust through an exterior wall that is not part of the rated separation.
- Keep ductwork entirely within the ADU whenever possible.

3. Provide Clear Construction Documents

- Include bath fan location, duct path, and soffit details in the construction drawings.
- Clearly label fire-rated assemblies and avoid routing mechanicals through these areas unless details demonstrate compliance.

Construction & Inspection Tips

- Verify fan placement on-site before framing inspection.
- Inspectors will issue a correction if the bath fan is found within a rated floor-ceiling assembly without an approved method.
 - **Sample Correction Language:** Bath fan installed in 1-hr rated floor-ceiling assembly. No UL-listed fan exists. Relocate below rated lid or move to non-rated location. Field-built box is not acceptable.

Questions?

For clarification of pre-submittal review assistance, contact the Daly City Building Division at (650) 991-8061.

Building smart. Design safe. Avoid costly corrections.



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