



PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
101 SOUTH BROAD STREET
PO Box 802
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0802



LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Commissioner

BULLETIN 90-3

Issued: December 1990 Revised: December 2005
Code. Ref. Update: September 2022

Subject: Gypsum Wallboard Classification

Reference: N.J.A.C. 5:23-3.14, Building Subcode, Section 703.3.1, exception;
N.J.A.C. 5:23-3.20, Mechanical Subcode, Chapter 2

It has recently come to the attention of the Department of Community Affairs that gypsum wallboard is sometimes being mistakenly considered a noncombustible material when applying the clearance-to-combustibles requirements of the Mechanical Subcode.

The definition of “noncombustible” in the Mechanical Subcode differs from the definition in the Building Subcode. The exception within the Building Subcode’s Section 703.3.1, Noncombustible Materials, states that a material having a structural base of noncombustible material (meeting ASTM E136), with a combustible surface not more than 0.125-inch thick, and having a flame-spread rating not greater than 50 (when tested in accordance with ASTM E84 or UL 723) is acceptable as a noncombustible material. Because the Building Subcode allows such “composite” materials, gypsum wallboard can be considered noncombustible as defined by the Building Subcode.

The Mechanical Subcode does not contain such a provision for composite materials. Noncombustible materials in the context of the Mechanical Subcode are those materials which pass ASTM E136. Gypsum board, because of its combustible facing, will not pass ASTM E136. (The only exception to this applies to Type I commercial kitchen hoods at Section 507.2.6 of the Mechanical Subcode.)

The difference in standards is due to the different purposes of the two subcodes. The Building Subcode is concerned with the performance of a material under the conditions during a fire, while the Mechanical Subcode is concerned with performance during exposure to a constant high-heat source.

Therefore remember, under the Mechanical Subcode, gypsum wallboard is classified as a combustible material.