

2012 INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE®

SECTION R408 UNDER-FLOOR SPACE

R408.1 Ventilation. The under-floor space between the bottom of the floor joists and the earth under any building (except space occupied by a *basement*) shall have ventilation openings through foundation walls or exterior walls. The minimum net area of ventilation openings shall not be less than 1 square foot (0.0929 m²) for each 150 square feet (14 m²) of under-floor space area, unless the ground surface is covered by a Class 1 vapor retarder material. When a Class 1 vapor retarder material is used, the minimum net area of ventilation openings shall not be less than 1 square foot (0.0929 m²) for each 1,500 square feet (140 m²) of under-floor space area. One such ventilating opening shall be within 3 feet (914 mm) of each corner of the building.

R408.2 Openings for under-floor ventilation. The minimum net area of ventilation openings shall not be less than 1 square foot (0.0929 m²) for each 150 square feet (14 m²) of under-floor area. One ventilation opening shall be within 3 feet (915 mm) of each corner of the building. Ventilation openings shall be covered for their height and width with any of the following materials provided that the least dimension of the covering shall not exceed 1/4 inch (6.4 mm):

1. Perforated sheet metal plates not less than 0.070 inch (1.8 mm) thick.
2. Expanded sheet metal plates not less than 0.047 inch (1.2 mm) thick.
3. Cast-iron grill or grating.
4. Extruded load-bearing brick vents.
5. Hardware cloth of 0.035 inch (0.89 mm) wire or heavier.
6. Corrosion-resistant wire mesh, with the least dimension being 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) thick.

Exception: The total area of ventilation openings shall be permitted to be reduced to 1/1,500 of the under-floor area where the ground surface is covered with an *approved* Class I vapor retarder material and the required openings are placed to provide cross ventilation of the space. The installation of operable louvers shall not be prohibited.

R408.3 Unvented crawl space. Ventilation openings in under-floor spaces specified in Sections R408.1 and R408.2 shall not be required where:

1. Exposed earth is covered with a continuous Class I vapor retarder. Joints of the vapor retarder shall overlap by 6 inches (152 mm) and shall be sealed or taped. The edges of the vapor retarder shall extend at least 6 inches

(152 mm) up the stem wall and shall be attached and sealed to the stem wall or insulation; and

2. One of the following is provided for the under-floor space:

2.1. Continuously operated mechanical exhaust ventilation at a rate equal to 1 cubic foot per minute (0.47 L/s) for each 50 square feet (4.7m²) of crawlspace floor area, including an air pathway to the common area (such as a duct or transfer grille), and perimeter walls insulated in accordance with Section N1103.2.1 of this code;

2.2. *Conditioned air* supply sized to deliver at a rate equal to 1 cubic foot per minute (0.47 L/s) for each 50 square feet (4.7 m²) of under-floor area, including a return air pathway to the common area (such as a duct or transfer grille), and perimeter walls insulated in accordance with Section N1102.2 of this code;

2.3. Plenum in existing structures complying with Section M1601.5, if under-floor space is used as a plenum.

R408.4 Access. Access shall be provided to all under-floor spaces. Access openings through the floor shall be a minimum of 18 inches by 24 inches (457 mm by 610 mm). Openings through a perimeter wall shall be not less than 16 inches by 24 inches (407 mm by 610 mm). When any portion of the through-wall access is below *grade*, an areaway not less than 16 inches by 24 inches (407 mm by 610 mm) shall be provided. The bottom of the areaway shall be below the threshold of the access opening. Through wall access openings shall not be located under a door to the residence. See Section M1305.1.4 for access requirements where mechanical *equipment* is located under floors.

R408.5 Removal of debris. The under-floor *grade* shall be cleaned of all vegetation and organic material. All wood forms used for placing concrete shall be removed before a building is occupied or used for any purpose. All construction materials shall be removed before a building is occupied or used for any purpose.

R408.6 Finished grade. The finished *grade* of under-floor surface may be located at the bottom of the footings; however, where there is evidence that the groundwater table can rise to within 6 inches (152 mm) of the finished floor at the building perimeter or where there is evidence that the surface water does not readily drain from the building site, the *grade* in the under-floor space shall be as high as the outside finished *grade*, unless an *approved* drainage system is provided.