SUBJECT: **Fences and Open-sided Buildings**

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 25, 2010

INTERPRETATION NUMBER: ADM – 1.202

SEE ALSO: 2006 IBC – Sections 105.2, 202, 704.2

INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

The building code defines "building" as any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy. The code goes on to define buildings as either open or enclosed, depending on the openness of the building perimeter. Open canopies or shelters are open buildings as defined by the code. Their area would be determined by the projected roof area covered or sheltered by the structure. Any vertical elements constructed within this area to enclose space and that are more than 5'-9" high would be considered walls by the building code and subject to all of the building code requirements for permitting, construction, fire-resistiveness, and providing egress from the spaces that they enclose. This would include 6' tall privacy or chain link fences. Such fences would be required to conform to the building construction type and materials permitted by the area and use of the building. Such fences installed at the perimeter of the building would also be subject to the same wind resistance design requirements as exterior walls, and fire-resistance ratings based on proximity to property lines. Solid fences erected as enclosures around an open-sided structure, but outside the projected roof area shall not be installed closer than 24" to the building footprint established by the projected roof area. We have established this distance by using the rationale that section 704.2 would allow roof projections to extend to within 24" of a property line on which a fence could be constructed, thus it is clear that the code by inference implies that that minimum separation is safe. Fences built closer to the structure than 24" will be considered as being a part of the structure and will be reviewed accordingly.