

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-26-01

October 10, 2001

The following is offered in response to your request for a formal interpretation of section 407.9 of the BOCA National Building Code/1996 and section 309.3 of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code portions of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question: Does the requirement for a noncombustible garage floor surface apply to all private garages, whether attached or detached?

Answer: No. When a permit for a private garage is requested as an accessory structure to a Use Group R-4 One and Two Family Dwelling, section 309.3 of the 1995 CABO Code referenced above applies. This section states in part that garage and carport floor surfaces shall be of an approved noncombustible surface. The CABO Code makes no distinction between attached or detached garages, so any garage constructed under the CABO Code must have an approved noncombustible floor surface. The BOCA/1996 Code, however, draws a distinction between attached and detached private garages when setting forth the requirement for floor surface. Section 407.9 states that the floor finish of *attached* garages shall be of concrete or other approved noncombustible material (emphasis added). Since the BOCA Code specifically states that the requirement for a noncombustible floor is limited to attached garages, this requirement does not apply to detached garages. It then follows that one could construct a detached private garage as Use Group U, Utility and Miscellaneous, under the BOCA/1996 portion of the 1999 State Building Code with a combustible floor. The Commentary to the BOCA/1996 Code further states that the hazards associated with a combustible floor in a private garage attached to a dwelling are to the occupants of the dwelling. Assuming proper fire separation distances in accordance with the BOCA/1996 Code, there would be no such hazard to occupants of a dwelling separated from a detached garage.