Fire Rating Requirements for Temporary Construction Barriers in Hospitals

THE DIRECT ANSWER

Temporary construction barriers in hospitals must be smoketight and built of noncombustible or limited-combustible materials as the baseline (the ILSM requirement) — and where the project presents a higher hazard than the occupied portion of the building , NFPA 241 requires barriers with a 1-hour fire resistance rating and 45-minute fire protection rating at openings . Separately, any penetration of an existing rated assembly must be firestopped to the assembly's rating with UL-listed materials.

THE THREE TIERS

- Baseline (all projects): smoketight, noncombustible or limited-combustible partitions that won't contribute to fire development or spread. 6-mil fire-retardant poly qualifies for short-duration, low-hazard use.
- Higher-hazard projects (NFPA 241): 1-hour fire resistance rating for the barrier, 45-minute protection at doors/openings. This is the hard-barrier tier — stud and drywall, properly constructed.
- Penetrations of rated assemblies: sealed with UL-listed firestop systems matching the penetrated assembly's rating. A 2-hour barrier with an unsealed pipe penetration is a 0-hour barrier.

WHERE THE RATING COMES FROM

- The rating requirement isn't arbitrary — it's driven by the ICRA assessment and the ILSM assessment together . The ICRA side asks about infection risk and duration; the ILSM/fire side asks about the hazard the project introduces relative to the occupied building.

FIELD QUESTION

What is the minimum fire rating for temporary construction barriers?

Baseline: smoketight, noncombustible/limited-combustible. Higher-hazard projects: 1-hour fire resistance with 45-minute opening protection per NFPA 241.

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Caution: codes, editions, and targets vary by facility and authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). Figures marked as common practice are facility targets, not code requirements. Confirm against your AHJ and the current code text before acting.