PRESCRIPTIVE VS. PERFORMANCE-BASED

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE SAFETY & BUILDING CODE SERIES BY MEYERFIRE UNIVERSITY | FEBRUARY 2023

SUMMARY

What is the difference between a **prescriptive** and **performance-based** code or code requirement?

- A **prescriptive** requirement or code generally defines detailed and specific requirements or results. These are often unambiguous.
  - Examples in practice might include a maximum travel distance, fire-rating for occupancy separation, or smoke detector spacing.
- A **performance-based** requirement or code establishes the desired end-result. Details of the "how" to achieve the end result are much less defined.
  - These can be more time-consuming, potentially more difficult to implement, and can be difficult to understand.
  - However, they also can quantify risk, provide an equivalent or better-level of life safety, and be more cost-effective overall.

A Prescriptive Order
("I would like three slices of cheese pizza")

A Performance-Based Order
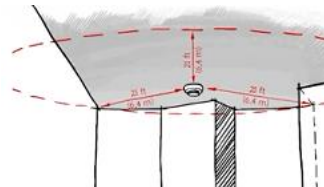("I would like to no longer be hungry")
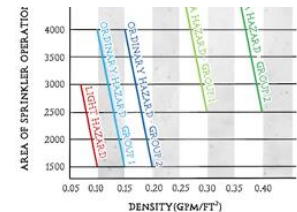
Examples of **Prescriptive** Requirements:

Travel Distance

Occupancy Separation Fire-Rating

Smoke Detector Spacing

Sprinkler Design Densities

Examples of **Performance-Based** Requirements:

Design of an Engineered Smoke Control System

VIDEO LINK

www.meyerfire.com/university/prescriptive-vs-performance-based-requirements

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