



Article 450 TRANSFORMERS AND TRANSFORMER VAULTS (INCLUDING SECONDARY TIES)

Part III. Transformer Vaults

450.41 Location. Vaults shall be located where they can be ventilated to the outside air without using flues or ducts wherever such an arrangement is practicable.

450.42 Walls, Roofs, and Floors. The walls and roofs of vaults shall be constructed of materials that have approved structural strength for the conditions with a minimum fire resistance of 3 hours. The floors of vaults in contact with the earth shall be of concrete that is not less than 100 mm (4 in.) thick, but, where the vault is constructed with a vacant space or other stories below it, the floor shall have approved structural strength for the load imposed thereon and a minimum fire resistance of 3 hours. For the purposes of this section, studs and wallboard construction shall not be permitted.

Exception: Where transformers are protected with automatic sprinkler, water spray, carbon dioxide, or halon, construction of 1-hour rating shall be permitted.

Informational Note No. 1: For additional information, see ANSI/ASTM E119-2012a, *Method for Fire Tests of Building Construction and Materials*.

Informational Note No. 2: A typical 3-hour construction is 150 mm (6 in.) thick reinforced concrete.

450.43 Doorways. Vault doorways shall be protected in accordance with 450.43(A), (B), and (C).

(A) Type of Door. Each doorway leading into a vault from the building interior shall be provided with a tight-fitting door that has a minimum fire rating of 3 hours. The authority having jurisdiction shall be permitted to require such a door for an exterior wall opening where conditions warrant.

Exception: Where transformers are protected with automatic sprinkler, water spray, carbon dioxide, or halon, construction of 1-hour rating shall be permitted.

Informational Note: For additional information, see NFPA 80-2013, *Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives*.

(B) Sills. A door sill or curb that is of an approved height that will confine the oil from the largest transformer within the vault shall be provided, and in no case shall the height be less than 100 mm (4 in.).

(C) Locks. Doors shall be equipped with locks, and doors shall be kept locked, access being allowed only to qualified persons. Personnel doors shall swing out and be equipped with panic bars, pressure plates, or other devices that are normally latched but open under simple pressure.

450.45 Ventilation Openings. Where required by 450.9, openings for ventilation shall be provided in accordance with 450.45(A) through (F).

(A) Location. Ventilation openings shall be located as far as possible from doors, windows, fire escapes, and combustible material.

(B) Arrangement. A vault ventilated by natural circulation of air shall be permitted to have roughly half of the total area of openings required for ventilation in one or more openings near the floor and the remainder in one or more openings in the roof or in the sidewalls near the roof, or all of the area required for ventilation shall be permitted in one or more openings in or near the roof.

(C) Size. For a vault ventilated by natural circulation of air to an outdoor area, the combined net area of all ventilating openings, after deducting the area occupied by screens, gratings, or louvers, shall not be less than 1900 mm² (3 in.²) per kVA of transformer capacity in service, and in no case shall the net area be less than 0.1 m² (1 ft²) for any capacity under 50 kVA.

(D) Covering. Ventilation openings shall be covered with durable gratings, screens, or louvers, according to the treatment required in order to avoid unsafe conditions.

(E) Dampers. All ventilation openings to the indoors shall be provided with automatic closing fire dampers that operate in response to a vault fire. Such dampers shall possess a standard fire rating of not less than 11.2 hours.

Informational Note: See ANSI/UL 555-2011, Standard for Fire Dampers.

(F) Ducts. Ventilating ducts shall be constructed of fire resistant material.

450.46 Drainage. Where practicable, vaults containing more than 100 kVA transformer capacity shall be provided with a drain or other means that will carry off any accumulation of oil or water in the vault unless local conditions make this impracticable. The floor shall be pitched to the drain where provided.

450.47 Water Pipes and Accessories. Any pipe or duct system foreign to the electrical installation shall not enter or pass through a transformer vault. Piping or other facilities provided for vault fire protection, or for transformer cooling, shall not be considered foreign to the electrical installation.

450.48 Storage in Vaults. Materials shall not be stored in transformer vaults.