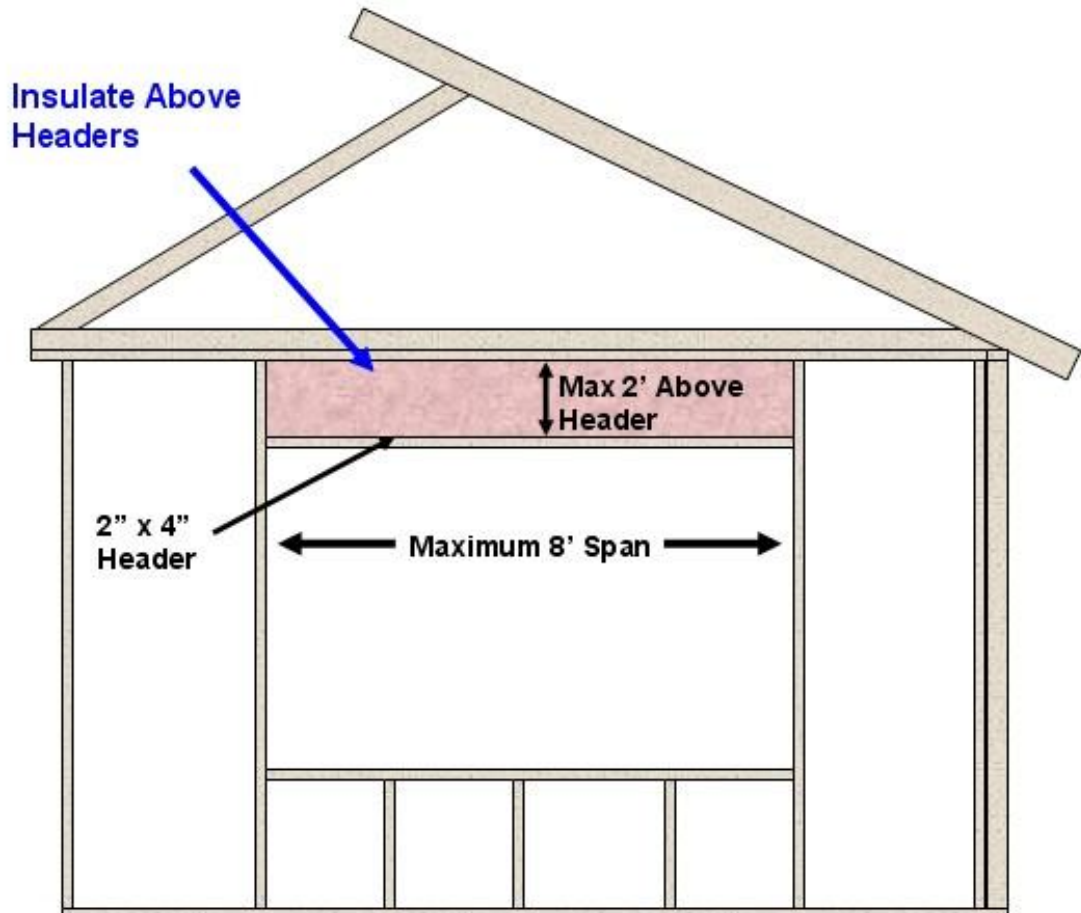




No Headers in Nonbearing Walls - Code Notes

The use of header stock over windows and doors in nonbearing walls is a typical construction practice throughout the industry. But a single 2-inch-by-4-inch is allowed to be used as a header in non-load-bearing wall systems. This practice is unfamiliar to many in the enforcement and building industry.



A single, flat 2" x 4" may be used as a header in exterior or interior non-load-bearing walls. On exterior walls, cavities above the headers must be insulated. For areas with high seismic risk or high wind loads, the maximum span shown may not be appropriate.

Eliminating unnecessary wood framing within walls can increase the thermal efficiency of the wall system. Less framing allows more insulation to be installed and also eliminates hot and cold spots (from thermal bridging through the frame) within the wall system.

A single, flat 2-inch-by-4-inch may be used as a header in exterior or interior non-load-bearing walls. The maximum opening may not exceed 8 feet. The vertical distance to the parallel surface above must be not more than 24 inches. No cripples or blocking are required above the header. On exterior walls, cavities above the headers must be insulated.

Plan Review



1. Verify that the framing details call out no headers only for nonbearing interior or exterior walls.
2. Verify that the horizontal span for each rough window and door opening is no greater than 8 feet.
3. Verify that the header height between the header and the next parallel framing member above the header is no greater than 2 feet. The next vertical parallel framing member will typically be the top plate.

Field Inspection

Framing Inspection

1. Verify that the horizontal rough opening framed out in the wall assembly matches, or is less than, that called out on the approved building plans.
2. Verify that the distance between the header and the next parallel framing member (typically the top plate) is no greater than 24 inches.

Insulation Inspection

1. Verify that the framing cavity above the header is insulated to the required insulation R-value called out on the approved plans or documentation.

Code Citations*

IRC 2000 and 2003, Section R602.7.2

Nonbearing walls. Load-bearing headers are not required in interior or exterior nonbearing walls. A single, flat 2-inch-by-4-inch (51 mm by 102 mm) member may be used as a header in interior or exterior nonbearing walls for openings up to 8 feet (2438 mm) in width if the vertical distance to the parallel nailing surface above is not more than 24 inches (610 mm). For such nonbearing headers, no cripples or blocking is required above the header.

IRC 2000 and 2003 Table R702.3.5 Minimum Thickness and Application of Gypsum Board

Allows the use of 24-inch-on-center framing for fastening gypsum board with either fasteners or adhesive 1/2 inch thickness or greater.

IRC 2000 and 2003 Section R703 Exterior Covering

Structural sheathing and siding requirements are based on Table R703.4. Note that footnote "a" specifies that the table is based on 16 inches on center and that studs-spaced-24-inches-on-center siding shall be applied to sheathing approved for that spacing.

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