

**FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 253: 1918
(HEIGHT AND AREA LIMITATIONS-GRADE A DEPARTMENT STORES)**

By Richard Schulte

The twenty-second Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in Chicago in May 1918. The Committee on Fire-Resistive Construction presented a report at this meeting. Included in this Report were provisions for Grade A department stores which included height and area limitations for department stores of fire resistive construction. The following is an excerpt from this committee's report:

*“ . . . The type of construction for a department store of Grade A shall comply with the following requirements **and shall be sprinklered throughout in an approved manner:***

Height:

*The height from grade to roof line shall not be more than **125 feet nor exceed a height of 2½ times the width of the widest street upon which it is located.***

Area:

*The area within enclosing firewalls shall **not exceed 30,000 square feet on the grade floor, the basement and other stories not exceeding in area the following: if fronting on one street 10,000 square feet; if fronting on two streets 15,000 square feet; if fronting on three or more streets 20,000 square feet.** The term "street" as herein used is a public thoroughfare at least 20 feet wide.”*

Compared with the height/area limitations presently contained in the International Building Code, the height/area limitations for department stores outlined above are extremely restrictive. The International Building Code presently permits unlimited height and unlimited area for mercantile occupancies constructed per the construction requirements for Grade A department stories.

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Source: *“Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual [NFPA] Meeting”*, Chicago, Illinois, 1918.

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