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NCARB PDD Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details
Topic 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Codes & Regulations: This section of the exam measures skills of Building Code Specialists and examines how codes and regulations apply at a detailed level during documentation. Candidates are expected to demonstrate knowledge of compliance with the International Building Code (IBC) as well as other specialty regulations, as well as how to interpret and apply these standards to ensure design and documentation meet legal and safety requirements.
Topic 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project Manual & Specifications: This section of the exam measures the skills of Specifications Writers and emphasizes the importance of developing documentation that goes beyond drawings. Candidates must understand how to identify and prioritize elements needed to prepare, maintain, and refine both the project manual and project specifications. It also assesses the ability to align and coordinate these specifications with the construction documents to ensure consistency and accuracy.
Topic 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Integration of Building Materials & Systems: This section of the exam measures the skills of Architectural Designers and focuses on the ability to resolve and integrate various building systems into cohesive project goals. It covers analyzing architectural systems and technologies, determining the size of structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, and incorporating specialty systems such as acoustics, lighting, security, and communications. It also evaluates the ability to detail how multiple building systems work together and to coordinate across disciplines to achieve a unified design.
Topic 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Construction Documentation: This section of the exam measures skills of Project Architects and addresses the creation and management of project documentation. Candidates are expected to demonstrate knowledge of documenting building design and site features, preparing detailed architectural drawings, and applying industry standards to produce a coordinated set of construction documents. The section also includes understanding how project changes impact documentation and how to communicate these updates effectively to both the design team and the client.:

Topic 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Cost: This section of the exam measures the skills of Construction Managers and focuses on the financial side of project execution. It evaluates the ability to analyze construction cost estimates to confirm that they align with project design intent and budgetary constraints. Although this is the smallest section, it is critical for ensuring projects remain feasible and economically viable.
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NCARB ARE 5.0 Project Development and Documentation Exam Sample Questions (Q15-Q20):

NEW QUESTION # 15

Refer to the exhibit.

What is the primary function of the 2 x 4 blocking shown at X in the drawing?

- A. Transfer the lateral loads from the ceiling joists
- B. Support the top of the partition
- C. Brace the ceiling joists
- D. Transfer the lateral load to the 1 x 8

Answer: C

Explanation:

Comprehensive Detailed Explanation with all NCARB ARE 5.0 Project Development and Documentation (PDD) Study Guide References:

In wood frame construction, blocking installed between joists at regular intervals (commonly 48 inches on center) serves primarily to brace and stabilize the joists laterally, preventing twisting and lateral displacement under load.

The 2x4 blocking at point X, placed perpendicular between the ceiling joists, acts as cross bracing.

It resists lateral torsional buckling of the joists and distributes loads evenly.

It also helps maintain alignment during construction and after the finish materials are installed.

The blocking does not support the partition top plate directly (that is the function of the studs beneath), nor does it transfer lateral load to the 1x8. Its main role is structural bracing for the joists.

Supporting References:

NCARB ARE 5.0 Review Manual, Project Development and Documentation, Structural Systems chapter Wood Frame Construction details from International Residential Code (IRC) Building construction texts such as "Fundamentals of Building Construction" by Allen and Iano, which describe blocking used to brace joists.

NEW QUESTION # 16

A family-owned apple farm in the Upper Midwest is taking advantage of a change in the local zoning code that added a new Agri-Tourism class in the existing farm zone. This allows the Owner to build a new facility on their existing site. The building will be open to the public and include a brewery, distillery, tap room, and market. The architect is ready to submit the drawings to the Owner for the 50% construction documents review.

To accommodate a compressed construction schedule, the Owner will be utilizing a design-build process. The Contractor has submitted the Pre-Engineered Metal Building (PEMB) shop drawings to the Architect for review, due to the lead time on this critical path item. Once construction begins, farming operations must be able to continue uninterrupted.

Key project information includes:

- * Brewing and distilling will operate year-round.
- * Brewery will initially include four fermenting tanks. Owner has requested space for at least two additional tanks. Potential expansion will be based on future sales.
- * Distillery will produce 16% alcohol, which is classified as a flammable liquid. Fire separations are required.

- * Tap Room is designed with seating for 300 people, not including exterior patio seating. It will have views to the working orchards and the historic buildings on site.
- * Tap Room is scheduled to be open from August through November. Owner would like options to extend operating dates based on popularity.
- * The Market area will feature local farm products and is not conditioned.
- * Entire building will be fully sprinklered.
- * Selected building materials are low-maintenance, as requested by the Owner, for durability and to reflect the nature of a working farm.
- * Mechanical and electrical systems will be hung from the building structure. These loads are included in PEMB shop drawings.
- * Public water and sewer is not available at the Project Site.
- * Occupancy sensors are included to reduce utility costs and achieve energy conservation requirements.

The following resources are available for your reference:

- * Architectural Drawings, including plans, elevations, sections, and schedules
- * Consultant Drawings, including structural, HVAC, power distribution, and plumbing
- * PEMB Shop Drawings
- * Design and Construction Schedule
- * Specification Excerpts, showing relevant spec sections
- * IBC and ADA Excerpts, showing relevant code and accessibility sections
- * After reviewing the documents, the architect discovers a coordination issue in the corridor.

The owner has revised the pro forma and directed the architect to add two additional Type B units to the design. A code review for the project indicates that the building occupancy is R-2.

What should the architect do to meet the owner's required revisions?

- A. Change the 2nd Floor Unit 1BR-SW into two studios and change the 10th Floor Unit 2BR-E to two 1- bedroom units.
- B. Change the 5th Floor Unit 2BR-E to two 1-bedroom units and change the 2nd Floor Laundry to a 1- bedroom unit.
- C. **Change the 10th Floor Unit 2BR-E to two 1-bedroom units and change the 7th Floor Unit 2BR-E to two 1-bedroom units.**

Answer: C

Explanation:

Converting two existing 2-bedroom units into two 1-bedroom units each yields two additional dwelling units total, while keeping every unit on an exterior wall for light/vent and maintaining typical plumbing stacks /egress.

A introduces two studios (size/layout risk) and alters a lower-floor stack; more coordination risk.

C converts a Laundry (likely interior and serving the building) into a unit-problematic for light/ventilation and building services.

PDD refs: IBC R-2 unit planning, light/ventilation, egress; planning & stacking strategies to minimize rework.

NEW QUESTION # 17

Where is the proper place to put a vapor barrier in a cold climate?

- A. On the exterior between the framing and the sheathing
- B. On the exterior between the metal siding and the sheathing
- C. In the cavity of the framing space
- D. **On the interior between the gypsum wallboard and the framing**

Answer: D

Explanation:

In cold climates, the vapor drive is from the warm interior to the cold exterior during winter. The vapor retarder/barrier belongs on the warm-in-winter side of the assembly-i.e., behind the interior gypsum, before the framing/insulation-to prevent interior moisture from reaching cold layers where it could condense.

PDD references: Psychrometrics & vapor drive; vapor retarder placement (ASHRAE; IBC/IECC guidance; ARE 5.0 PDD-Thermal & Moisture Protection).

NEW QUESTION # 18

□ Refer to the exhibit.

What is an accurate description of the air distribution system shown?

- A. Supply air is delivered at a low velocity.
- B. Ducted supply and return air is utilized.
- C. The system prohibits individual comfort control.
- D. The system is inefficient in summer months.

Answer: A

Explanation:

The diagram shows a displacement ventilation system. In this system

Cool supply air (about 65°F) is introduced at floor level at low velocity through floor diffusers.

Warm air rises as it picks up heat from occupants/equipment and stratifies near the ceiling, where it is returned or exhausted.

This creates a stratification layer with cooler, cleaner air in the occupied zone and warmer air above.

This is efficient for comfort, air quality, and energy use in spaces #12 ft high.

Why not other options:

- A: This system uses a plenum return, not ducted supply and return for both.
- C: It is efficient in summer since it uses warmer supply air and reduced fan energy.
- D: Individual comfort control is possible via diffuser location/adjustment.

PDD Reference: ARE 5.0 PDD "Mechanical Systems-Air distribution types," ASHRAE Fundamentals, displacement ventilation diagrams.

NEW QUESTION # 19

A wall separating a distillery and a taproom must meet which of the following requirements based on a flammable liquid presence?

- A. 3-hour fire barrier
- B. 1-hour fire barrier
- C. 1-hour smoke partition
- D. 2-hour fire wall

Answer: D

Explanation:

Per IBC Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, distillation involving flammable liquids requires a 2-hour fire-resistance- rated fire wall between H-occupancy (hazardous) and assembly use (A-2). Objective 1.3 of the PDD Handbook emphasizes understanding of life safety code implications in space planning.

NEW QUESTION # 20

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