



File: 157294

November 9, 2009

Greetings,

I am pleased to inform you that new standards for adaptable housing have been added to the BC Building Code, effective December 31, 2009. Adaptable housing is an approach to residential design and construction in which homes can be modified at minimal cost to meet occupants' changing needs over time.

The Building and Safety Policy Branch worked closely with community representatives, industry, and health care support and seniors groups to develop the new standards. The public had the opportunity to comment during an online consultation held in late summer 2008.

Many local governments are interested in including adaptable housing design features in their communities. At the same time, the Province is committed to developing building standards that are as consistent as possible across B.C.

While the Building Code will not require housing to be adaptable, the new adaptable housing standards will apply whenever adaptable housing is built. Local governments that want to require adaptable housing can add the requirement to their land use bylaws, with a reference to compliance with the standards in the Building Code. This approach provides consistency in how adaptable housing is designed and constructed, while giving local governments the flexibility to decide whether they want to require it.

More information on the new adaptable housing standards can be found in the attached bulletin or online at http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/building/adaptable_housing/index.html.

Sincerely,

Jeff Vasey
Executive Director
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Attachment

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No. B09-04
November 2, 2009

New Adaptable Housing Standards in the BC Building Code

New standards for the design and construction of adaptable housing have been added to the BC Building Code. The new standards include wider doorways, accessible entrances, extra reinforcement in bathroom walls to allow grab bars to be installed and easy-to-use light switches and door handles. A summary of the new standards is available at http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/building/adaptable_housing/summary.html.

Adaptable housing is designed and built so that accessibility features can be added more easily and inexpensively after construction. It will benefit anyone whose mobility is limited due to age, disability or illness, making it easier for them to function more independently in their own home.

Scope of the Adaptable Housing Standards

The new standards will apply to single-storey suites in new residential multi-unit buildings, but the Building Code will not *require* these suites to be adaptable. Individual local governments that want to require adaptable housing within their communities can add the requirement to their land use bylaws, with a reference to compliance with the standards in the Building Code. This approach provides consistency in how adaptable housing is designed and built, while giving local governments the flexibility to decide whether they want to require it.

The Building Code already requires residential multi-unit buildings to have a minimum level of accessibility. The new standards include additional accessibility requirements that will apply to the individual units as well as to building entrances, corridors and common areas.

Implementation

The new standards will apply to building permit applications for developments that include adaptable housing that are submitted on or after December 31, 2009, whether adaptable housing is required by bylaw or built voluntarily. More information can be found at http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/building/adaptable_housing/index.html.