



FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION OF BC

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FCABC Board of Directors Position Statement Single Means of Egress

Reducing Stairs in Residential Buildings up to Eight Stories High Creates Escape Hazards for Occupants and Inhibits Vital Emergency Response Operations

The Fire Chiefs Association of BC Board of Directors, hereby declares its support for the retention of the requirement for a second staircase as defined in the BCBC for multi residential structures. This position is vital to enable fire and emergency services to respond effectively to incidents, safeguarding both occupants and firefighters.

The Fire Chiefs' Association of BC, is adopting this position paper on the need to continue the requirements for a second staircase in multi residential structures as defined in the BCBC, as this removes the risk of a single point of failure which would prevent or limit firefighting activities and/or resident escape routes.

Call to Action

The FCABC urges fire service leaders to oppose legislative attempts to amend out the second staircase requirement. It is imperative to engage with urban planners, legislators, and the building community, providing informed perspectives to ensure the safety of communities and the welfare of those who serve them.

The FCABC reaffirms its commitment to advocate for measures that prioritize safety in residential structures, emphasizing the irreplaceable value of two staircases in ensuring the well-being of occupants and responders alike.

The Issue at Hand

The BC Provincial Government seeks to potentially eliminate the current code requirements for some residential buildings up to eight stories high. The proposed changes are driven by purported benefits such as increased housing availability and reduced costs, however, it is the FCABC's position that these code changes endanger occupants and inhibits emergency response operations. The consensus process by all stakeholders has been used for decades to reflect all parties' interests. These proposals, backed by developers, builders, and urban planners, bypass the established National Code Consensus process, leading to local exceptions and allowances that jeopardize occupant and firefighter safety.

The Importance of Two Staircases

The requirement for two separate staircases in multi residential buildings as defined in the BC Building Code is a longstanding requirement that is grounded in previous research and the consensus code process. This provision ensures vital redundancy in egress options, crucial for occupant evacuation and firefighter access during emergencies. It is founded on the principle of safeguarding lives and should not be compromised for short-term gains.

Addressing Contemporary Fire Challenges

Modern hazards, such as those posed by lithium-ion battery-powered devices, underscore the need to be able to exit a building quickly and safely in an emergency. The proliferation of such risks necessitates stringent adherence to building codes that prioritize occupant and firefighter safety, with the inclusion of a second staircase serving as a cornerstone of this protective framework.

Enhancing Safety and Accessibility

Beyond its life-saving implications, the provision of two staircases enhances the efficiency, convenience, and inclusivity of residential living environments. It mitigates congestion, promotes equitable access for individuals with mobility challenges, and fosters a more welcoming community for all residents. This is especially important when more and more combustible products, including delivered packages and vanity trash collection services add potential fuel loads into the corridors.

Considering Long-Term Implications

While critics may raise concerns about construction costs and usable floor space, the benefits of retaining the two-staircase requirement far outweigh these considerations.