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Self-service Storage Buildings

This bulletin provides information about changes in the British Columbia Building Code (Building Code) 2024 related to self-service storage buildings adopted from the model National Building Code of Canada (NBC) 2020. These new Building Code 2024 requirements apply to projects for which a building permit is applied for on or after March 8, 2024.

Background

The NBC 2015 edition introduced a stand-alone section for self-service storage buildings in a new Section 3.9. of Division B. The 2018 edition of the Building Code did not adopt the NBC 2015 Section 3.9. Section 3.9. was continued in the NBC 2020 edition and which is adopted in the Building Code 2024. The changes relate only to Part 3 of Division B, there are no changes related to Part 9 of Division B related to self-service storage buildings.

The provisions for self-service storage buildings are intended for clarity of applicable Code provisions, introduce provisions specific to these unique building types, and to harmonize provisions with other provinces and territories.

Self-service Storage Buildings, Section 3.9. of Division B

Provisions for self-service storage buildings are specific to one-storey buildings, with no basement or mezzanines, with exterior access to each storage unit. Other configurations of self-service storage buildings must conform to the existing applicable requirements of the Code. Requirements in Section 3.9. of Division B govern over other requirements in the Code should they conflict. Occupant load requirements found elsewhere in Part 3 of Division B do not apply to self-service storage buildings under Section 3.9. of Division B.

Self-service storage buildings under Section 3.9. of Division B are classified as a Group F, Division 2 medium-hazard industrial major occupancies. For the purposes of applying certain provisions, self-service storage buildings are permitted to be grouped, such that multiple self-service storage buildings may be considered as a single building in select circumstances.

These buildings can only be used for storage and cannot include any other major occupancies. The only exception is that a single dwelling unit may be contained within one

self-service storage building¹ on a property and a small office² may be adjacent to, and considered a part of, that dwelling unit.

Self-service storage building areas may be grouped, as an option, for determining building area and relation to a street or streets³. Where grouped for a total building area, the access route requirements apply to the group as if the group were a single building⁴.

Self-service storage buildings may be grouped for applying spatial separation requirements, however grouped buildings⁵ must be at least 9 metres from adjacent buildings or groups of buildings⁶.

Fire separations are not required between individual storage units, however; unless the building is sprinklered, the floor area must be divided into fire compartments not exceeding 500 square metres in area, and each fire compartment must be separated from adjacent fire compartments with a fire separation with a 1-hour fire-resistance rating.

Individual self-service storage units receive an exemption from the requirements for exit doors to swing on the vertical access in the direction of exit travel⁷ which effectively allows individual units to be served by a single overhead door.

At least one self-service storage building on a property must provide two separate public washrooms each containing a water closet and lavatory⁸.

The British Columbia Fire Code (Fire Code) 2024 limits the storage of flammable and combustible liquids in individual self-service storage units⁹ to not more than 50 Litres, of which not more than 30 Litres can be Class I liquids. Dispensing and handling is not permitted in the storage units.

¹ The dwelling unit must be separated from storage units with a 2-hour fire separation.

² The office may not be more than 50 square metres in area, and as part of the dwelling unit, is also separated from storage units with a 2-hour fire separation.

³ See Article 3.9.2.1. and Note A-3.9.2.1.(1) of Division B.

⁴ See Article 3.9.2.3. of Division B.

⁵ Grouped buildings where each building is at least 6 metres from any adjacent building within the group need not comply with Subsection 3.2.3. Buildings within a group may be less than 6 metres from each other, however Subsection 3.2.3. would apply in those instances.

⁶ See Article 3.9.2.2. and Note A-3.9.2.2. of Division B.

⁷ See Sentence 3.4.6.12.(2) of Division B.

⁸ Washrooms are not required if a sanitary drainage system cannot be installed to serve a self-service storage building. See Sentence 3.7.2.1.(3) of Division B.

⁹ See Subsection 4.2.12. of Division B of the Fire Code 2024. More information on the Fire Code 2024 is provided in Bulletin F24-01 soon to be released.