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Relocated Buildings

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance and clarification for a consistent application of the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC, Code) concerning relocating buildings. Relocation of a building as an alternative to demolition can have positive environmental impacts due to its reduction of both demolition waste and the use of new resources.

Although the primary focus of the BCBC is for the design and construction of new buildings, the BCBC also applies to deconstruction and the construction of alterations and additions to existing buildings. Further, the BCBC applies to the work necessary to ensure safety in an existing building that is being relocated to ensure that the building's performance is not decreased below a level that previously existed. An objective of this bulletin is to provide information and direction for such instances so that the BCBC is applied in a manner that does not discourage the relocation of an existing building in favour of demolition, and that authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) and industry professionals can better understand a reasonable and appropriate application of the BCBC.

A relocated building is considered an existing structure used for supporting or sheltering a use or occupancy that has been physically moved to a different building location¹ (this is different from structures on wheels such as park model trailers). Temporary buildings such as construction site offices, seasonal storage buildings, special events facilities, emergency facilities, and similar structures, designed and intended to be relocated on an ongoing basis, and which the AHJ has exempted from the BCBC, are not within the scope of this bulletin. The Code does not apply to factory-built housing and components that comply with the CSA-Z240 MH Series standard², but the Code does apply to the site preparations, connection to services, and installation of appliances for those houses and components. This bulletin does not discuss compliance with the CSA-Z240 MH Series standard.

This bulletin is strictly limited to clarification of the BCBC's application to the relocation of existing buildings to locations where the BCBC applies³ and is not intended to inform or

¹ An existing building moved to a new location is not considered a new building by the Code.

² There are explicit requirements within the CSA-Z240 MH Series standard that require compliance with enactments in force at the location where the home or components are to be installed. In these circumstances, it is the CSA-Z240 MH Series standard that itself may require compliance with the Code.

³ The BCBC applies to all buildings in B.C. except for the City of Vancouver, Treaty First Nations that do not reference the BCBC in their agreements, and Federal Lands.

intervene with valid authorities of local governments or other provincial, territorial, or federal jurisdictions including but not limited to:

- Local government matters related to land use/zoning,
- landscape,
- site access and roadway use,
- original building site demolition/remediation,
- Provincial jurisdiction such as highway use, *Motor Vehicle Act*, *WorkSafeBC*, etcetera,
- Provincial, territorial, or federal enactments (such as other codes and standards).

Although the BCBC references standards for compressed gas and electrical equipment, the Safety Standards Act and its pursuant regulations governs new gas and electrical services, appliances, and equipment, and the modification to services, appliances, and equipment. This bulletin does not discuss permits or other matters under the Safety Standards Act.

The overarching premise of the application of the BCBC to a relocated building is:

- a retroactive application of the current BCBC is not required for a relocated building if the sole reason is due to its relocation,
- the correction of an unsafe condition should one be found to exist, and
- as with any existing building, relocated or not, the current BCBC is applicable to new alterations/additions that occur. However, in some circumstances after sound analysis and good judgment by the designer and local authorities, discretion may need to be applied to a current Code requirement for a realistic and practical application in meeting the Code's intended objective.

The BCBC applies to changes in occupancy and to many design and construction activities including whenever there is an alteration to a building and to any work necessary to ensure safety in a relocated building⁴. Any alteration to an existing building, including alterations associated with relocating an existing building, shall not reduce the level of safety performance below the level that existed prior to relocation⁵. The designer and the AHJ are encouraged to work together to identify the applicable Code requirements and their importance to the Code's objectives. The building's suitability related to occupant loads and environmental loads⁶, such as snow loads and lateral loads (wind and seismic), applicable to the proposed building site, must be considered. Should a building be relocated to a location

⁴ See Sentence 1.1.1.1.(1) of Division A for the full scope of application.

⁵ See Sentence 1.1.1.2.(1) of Division A for the full scope of application to existing buildings. See also Note A-1.1.1.2.(1) which further clarifies the intent and provides a reference to the User's Guide – NBC 1995, Application of Part 9 to Existing Buildings which can be accessed here:

<https://doi.org/10.4224/40001366>

⁶ Environmental loads are determined by the AHJ, or alternatively found in Appendix C of Division B.

with higher environmental loads than the building was originally designed to, structural upgrades will be required.

Alteration

Alterations include changes and extensions (additions) to any matter or thing related to an existing building. A new foundation at a new location is considered new construction, and anchorage of a relocated building to that new foundation will likely result in some changes to the existing building. (The design and construction requirements for the new foundation include providing for appropriate soil bearing capacity, perimeter drainage, insulation, etcetera.) Alterations related to the relocation of a building should be considered in a similar context to alterations to existing buildings generally.

Unsafe condition

The Code's application focusses on matters of safety which include building provisions such as structural design, fire protection, and occupant life safety. The siting of the relocated building on its new site would need to comply with the Code's spatial separation requirements for the type of construction of the exposing building face. The unique features and exposing building face of the existing building being relocated determine the limiting distance needed to protect adjacent buildings at the new location. The Code uses the term 'unsafe condition' to apply to potential hazards to a person's health as well as safety. Should a relocated residential building be installed with a new attached storage garage, current Code requirements for carbon monoxide detection will be required to mitigate the potential unsafe condition.

Work necessary to ensure safety

The application of the BCBC to a relocated building requires consultation and coordination between the AHJ and the owner to determine the appropriate level of safety performance for the existing building based on its conditions at the original location, and what improvements are necessary to meet current safety requirements of the BCBC at the new location. It is highly recommended an assessment / survey of the building proposed to be relocated be provided by a competent person to assist in facilitating the discussions. Generally, this primarily applies to any parts of the building that are directly being affected by the process of relocation, along with critical elements that affect the life-safety of the building at the new location. It is of course ideal to identify barriers to moving a building to a desired location before deconstruction and construction activities begin.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Does the BCBC permit homes built to the CSA Z240 MH Series of standards to be moved?

Yes, the BCBC anticipates homes built to the CSA MH Series of standards to be moved to one or more locations over their lifespan. These homes have a nameplate with information as to their design specifications and the structural loads they can withstand, and this helps determine what locations and conditions these homes are suitable for. The BCBC regulates the site preparations (siting, foundations, mountings) and the connections to services and installation of appliances for these homes. Local enactments such as building and zoning/land use bylaws may also apply. This bulletin does not discuss compliance, certification, or alterations to homes built to the CSA MH Series of standards.

Work with the local AHJ and use the [Manufactured Home Registry](#) when planning to move a home, whether new or existing, that is built to the CSA Z240 MH Series of standards.

When I move a building, do I follow the edition of the code it was originally designed to for installation at the new location?

No. In some cases, existing buildings could have been built before the first Provincial Codes were adopted. Any alterations that are required as part of the relocation of an existing building to a new location must conform to the edition of the BCBC in force at the time they occur, meaning those aspects of the building that are changing or reconstructed as part of a relocation today must conform to the edition currently in force. Alterations shall not decrease the level of building performance that existed prior to the alterations.

What happens if I move a building that has had work done without permits and doesn't meet Code?

While it is anticipated that not all aspects of existing buildings will meet current Code requirements, an assessment of existing building's performance is critical for determining how it will perform at a new location. Work done without permits may be more difficult to assess and work that does not meet the minimum requirements of the Code can pose undue risk to health and safety. Work with the local AHJ to develop a plan for what work will be required as part of a relocation and whether an unsafe condition exists.

Can local authorities have enactments and other rules for what types of building can be moved into their jurisdiction?

Yes, work with the local AHJ when planning to move a building into their jurisdiction and follow local building requirements.

The contents of this Bulletin are not intended to be provided as legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice. The Building and Safety Standards Branch does not enforce compliance with the British Columbia Building Code. Local authorities are authorized to enforce the British Columbia Building Code through the Local Government Act and the Community Charter.