



# Information Bulletin

## Building and Safety Standards Branch

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**Office of the Fire Commissioner**  
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### 2018 Edition of the British Columbia Fire Code

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The Province has adopted the 2018 edition of the British Columbia Fire Code (BC Fire Code). The BC Fire Code 2018 is effective December 10, 2018.

#### How to Obtain a Copy of the BC Fire Code 2018

The BC Fire Code is available for purchase from Queen's Printer at [bccodes.ca](http://bccodes.ca), and will be available at all [BC Public Libraries](#) soon.

#### New Requirements

The BC Fire Code is based substantially on the model National Fire Code. British Columbia (BC) adopts most of the national requirements into subsequent editions of the BC Fire Code.

The National Fire Code 2015 incorporated 77 technical changes, most of which are adopted in the BC Fire Code. These changes enhance code language clarity, introduce new concepts, and expand existing requirements. Some of the new requirements in the National Fire Code include:

- Additional construction site fire safety requirements for mid-rise combustible buildings,
- Updates to hot works activities and final inspections,
- Harmonization of the dangerous goods classification system, and
- References to new standards for reusing and refurbishing storage tanks.

For more information on the changes introduced in the National Fire Code 2015, please visit the National Research Council of Canada's [website](#).

Changes specific to BC reflect the unique needs of the province's geography, climate, and industry. The Building and Safety Standards Branch conducted a public review to seek feedback on the proposed code changes. Feedback was carefully considered and helped inform the BC Fire Code 2018.

This bulletin provides an overview of the following significant code changes, specific to BC:

- Application to Fire Alarm, Standpipe, and Sprinkler Systems,
- Emergency Lighting and Exit Signs, and
- Smoke Alarms.

A proposed code change related to use of elevators in emergencies was not adopted. An overview is included in this bulletin.

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### Application to Fire Alarm, Standpipe, and Sprinkler Systems

The BC Fire Code 2018 includes changes to clarify that code requirements for fire alarms, standpipes, and sprinkler systems are not intended to retroactively apply to existing buildings.

New language is intended to clarify that existing fire protection systems that provide an acceptable level of safety are not required to be upgraded with each new edition of the BC Building and/or BC Fire Code, or with the inclusion of new requirements that were not in force at the time a building is constructed. Fire code users are directed to Article 1.1.1.1. of Division A of the BC Building Code to determine when fire alarm, standpipe, and sprinkler systems are required; such as but not limited to when a building is subject to an alteration, addition, or change of occupancy.

### Emergency Lighting and Exit Signs

The BC Fire Code 2018 clarifies requirements for emergency lighting and exit signs.

Previous language that was subject to misinterpretation has been changed to clarify that there is no requirement in the BC Fire Code to remove and replace existing exit signs that comply with earlier editions of the BC Building Code. BC Fire Code users are directed to Article 1.1.1.1. of Division A in the BC Building Code to determine when replacement of exit signs is required; such as but not limited to when a building is subject to an alteration, addition, or change of occupancy, or when an exit sign is replaced. The code language has also been changed to reflect the intent that requirements for emergency lighting and exit signs apply in all means of egress, not only exits.

### Smoke Alarms

The BC Fire Code 2018 clarifies requirements for smoke alarms.

The reference to the standard CAN/ULC-S531-14, "Smoke Alarms" was deleted because the installation of smoke alarms in new buildings is regulated by the BC Building Code. This change also clarifies that there is no requirement in the BC Fire Code to replace existing smoke alarms that comply with previous editions of the BC Building Code.

The BC Fire Code continues to regulate the installation of smoke alarms in buildings where they are not already installed, such as for buildings that were constructed before smoke alarms were required by the BC Building Code. Clause 1.1.1.1.(1)(k) of Division B in the BC Building Code allows these buildings to comply with the BC Fire Code's smoke alarm requirements, rather than those in the BC Building Code. In such buildings, battery operated smoke alarms are permitted. In addition, a new appendix note clarifies how the requirements apply in existing buildings where smoke alarms are already installed, should an owner choose to add additional smoke alarms. In such cases, it is not intended that all existing alarms be upgraded to meet the most recent BC Building Code requirements.

The permission for dwelling units constructed prior to 1979 to have battery operated smoke alarms (BC Fire Code 2012 Clause 2.1.3.3.(4)(b)) of Division B is deleted for 2018 because it is redundant – Clause 2.1.3.3.(4)(c) already applies to any building or dwelling unit where a smoke alarm was not originally required.

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### Use of Elevators in Emergency

For the BC Fire Code 2018, it was proposed to align with the requirements of the National Fire Code by removing the requirement for a fire safety sign or symbol indicating that the elevator is not to be used in case of fire. The National Fire Code relies on the required fire safety plan to direct occupants on evacuation procedures for the building.

However feedback received through the public review of proposed code changes indicated that removing the sign or symbol to not to use the elevator in an emergency may not provide adequate information to occupants in the event of an emergency and may delay evacuation. As a result, the BC Fire Code 2018 retains the requirement to post a fire safety sign or symbol indicating that the elevator is not to be used in an emergency.

### Education and Training

The Building and Safety Standards Branch is working with partners to support code users in learning about new code requirements. Additional information about education and training opportunities is available at [www.gov.bc.ca/buildingcodes](http://www.gov.bc.ca/buildingcodes).

The Office of the Fire Commissioner is the leader of fire safety awareness and prevention in BC and is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the BC Fire Code. Please see their [website](#) for more information regarding fire safety and education guidelines, bulletins, and position papers. The Office of the Fire Commissioner developed a bulletin with a checklist to support industry to prevent fires in and around construction and/or demolition sites. For more information please refer to the [Fire Safety for Construction and Demolition Sites](#) bulletin.

### Code Development

Codes are constantly changing to reflect new technologies and practices. Model National Codes are developed through a consensus-based committee process with representation from all provinces and territories, related industries, and the public. Information on how to participate on a committee, or attend a committee meeting is available in the following links. To participate in the development of codes, code change requests can be sent to the National Research Council of Canada.

### Links

- Codes Canada: (volunteer & attend) [https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/solutions/advisory/codes\\_centre\\_index.html](https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/solutions/advisory/codes_centre_index.html)
- Building and Safety Standards: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/construction-industry/building-codes-standards>
- Office of the Fire Commissioner: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/fire-safety>
- National Research Council of Canada Code Change Request: [https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/solutions/advisory/codes\\_centre/code\\_change\\_request.html](https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/solutions/advisory/codes_centre/code_change_request.html)

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### Contact the Building and Safety Standards Branch

- **General** inquiries can be sent to [building.safety@gov.bc.ca](mailto:building.safety@gov.bc.ca)
- **Technical** Code inquiries can be sent to [codequestion@gov.bc.ca](mailto:codequestion@gov.bc.ca)
- **Fire Code Enforcement and Administration** inquiries can be sent to [OFC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:OFC@gov.bc.ca).

The Building and Safety Standards Branch does not enforce compliance with the BC Building Code or the BC Fire Code. Local governments are authorized to enforce the BC Building Code through the *Local Government Act* and the Community Charter.

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