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Building Officials Qualifications

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information about the mandatory qualification scheme for building officials in the Province of British Columbia.

Please note that unless it is clear from the context, the term ‘building officials’ in this bulletin includes plumbing officials.

Background

The Building Act (the Act) was passed in 2015 to modernize and improve the building regulatory system in British Columbia. In order to help assure the competency of building officials and support more consistent application of the BC Building Code, the Building Act sets out a requirement that all building officials must be qualified to make decisions about conformance with provincial building regulations on behalf of local authorities¹. Building officials are typically employed by local authorities to monitor the compliance of building design and construction with building regulations and bylaws. They review plans, issue building permits, and monitor buildings under construction.

On February 28, 2021, all building officials working on behalf of local authorities must hold qualifications commensurate with their scope of practice. Prior to this requirement in the Act, there were no mandatory requirements for the training, examination, or continuing professional development of building officials, although many chose to participate in the Building Officials’ Association of BC (BOABC) voluntary certification programs.

Registering and Maintaining Qualification Requirements

To lawfully make compliance decisions, an individual must either be an exempt building professional² or be entered into the register of qualified officials and maintain their compliance with the qualification requirements going forward. To be qualified, one must:

1. Be a **member** in good standing of the BOABC;
2. **Pass exams** according to the level of their responsibilities;
3. Undertake **annual continuing professional development (CPD)**;
4. Be entered in the **register of qualified building officials**; and
5. Pay an **annual fee to the administrative authority** and submit an **annual report** to the registrar.

¹ Local authorities in this document means a municipality or regional district other than the City of Vancouver, Treaty First Nations, the Nisga’a Nation or a Nisga’a Village, the board of governors of the UBC, or any other authority prescribed by regulation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

² Exempt building professionals are defined in Part 3 – Division 1 of the Building Act General Regulation, and include architects, professional engineers, and holders of limited licences under the Engineers and Geoscientists Act whose scope of practice includes consulting on building regulations. Other designations for specific limited circumstances and decisions are also identified there.

Building Official Classes

There are three regular classes of building officials (Levels 1, 2 and 3) and two of plumbing officials (Levels 1 and 2). Each class has an associated scope of practice, which describes which types of buildings or plumbing systems about which members of that class are able to make decisions. An official may not make decisions outside of their scope of practice and local authorities may not require this of their building officials.

Building Types:			Plumbing Systems:	
Level 1			Level 1	
Level 2			Level 2	
Level 3				
Single-family dwellings and basic building types (Simple Part 9)	Small industrial and multi-family dwellings (Complex Part 9)	Large or complex industrial and public buildings (Part 3)	<i>Simple</i> plumbing matters. Some kinds of buildings, such as hospitals, are excluded.	<i>Advanced</i> plumbing matters which can be found in any kind of building.
<i>E.g. Houses, duplexes and rowhouses under four storeys.</i>	<i>E.g. Low-rise apartments and townhouses, small industrial, mercantile.</i>	<i>E.g. High-rise apartments, industrial and mercantile, public buildings.</i>		
<i>Note that it is possible for an official to be registered in both a building and a plumbing class.</i>				
<i>Note that 'Part 9' and 'Part 3' are commonly used generalizations. For a more detailed description of the types of buildings that fall into each level's scope of work, please refer to the Introduction to Trainee Classes available on the building codes and standards website linked below.</i>				

In 2019, five trainee classes were added – one corresponding with each of the regular classes. These classes are an optional pathway for new and existing building officials to further their careers by practicing in a class one higher than their current level of qualification for a specified time. During this period, the trainee official is supported by their employer (a local authority) according to an agreed-upon plan including items such as formal or informal mentorship, peer support arrangements, or formal education. The goal is for the trainee to acquire knowledge and skills that would position them to successfully complete the qualification exam(s) required to register in the corresponding regular class.

Details to Follow

More details on the trainee classes and the administration of the register of qualified building officials, including application procedures, will be available over the coming weeks. Continue to check both the Provincial building codes and standards site at www.gov.bc.ca/buildingcodes and the Building Officials' Association of BC site at www.boabc.org.

Contact the Building and Safety Standards Branch

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