

# **INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION SERVICE, INC.**

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## **ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BUILDING DEPARTMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

**AC475**

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### **PREFACE**

The attached accreditation criteria has been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced herein. The criteria was developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and is effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with this criteria. If the criteria is an updated version from a previous edition, solid vertical lines (|) in the outer margin within the criteria indicate a technical change or addition from the previous edition. Deletion indicators (→) are provided in the outer margins where a paragraph or item has been deleted if the deletion resulted from a technical change. This criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

IAS may consider alternate criteria provided the proponent submits substantiating data demonstrating that the alternate criteria are at least equivalent to the attached criteria and otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.

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# ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BUILDING DEPARTMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**1.1 Scope:** This criteria sets forth requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), accreditation of governmental entities responsible for enforcement of the Building Code and other enactments related to Health, Safety, and Accessibility for persons with disabilities, fire protection of buildings and facilities as well as other enactments relating to enhancing the quality of life within their jurisdictions, such as fire, zoning or traffic laws.

**1.2 References:** Publications listed below refer to current editions (unless otherwise stated), current editions of related construction codes published by the International Code Council or codes duly adopted by the relevant jurisdiction.

**1.2.1** *British Columbia Building Code (BCBC) and Vancouver Building By-law*, current edition.

**1.2.2** ISO/IEC Standard 17020, General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection.

**1.2.3** *Establishing Building Permit Fees (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, by Michael Bouse, published by the International Code Council and International Accreditation Service, Inc.

**1.2.4** IAS Rules of Procedure for Building Department Accreditation.

**1.2.5** IAS Policy on Accreditation Certificate Validity.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

**2.1 Accreditation:** Formal third-party recognition that a body fulfills specified requirements and is competent to carry out specific conformity assessment and regulatory tasks.

**2.2 Accreditation Committee:** A committee of government officials appointed by the IAS Board of Directors to monitor the work of and to develop accreditation criteria for IAS.

**2.3 Accreditation Review Committee (ARC):** A committee established by the IAS Board of Directors to render accreditation decisions on the IAS Building Department Accreditation program.

**2.4 Alternate Solutions:** A material, design or method of construction that has been accepted where the authority having jurisdiction finds that the proposed design or product is satisfactory and complies with the intent of the provisions of the code.

**2.5 Appeal:** Request for reconsideration of any administrative decision by the department related to its enforcement authority. Administrative decisions include:

- refusal to accept an application for issuance of permit;
- refusal to proceed with plan check or inspections;
- corrective action requests;
- refusal to agree with the designer's code interpretation;

- decisions to deny, suspend or halt construction work;
- any other action that impedes the attainment of a permit for construction or certificate of occupancy.

**2.6 Applicant:** An individual or corporation applying for a building construction permit or plan review in accordance with local bylaws or other normative documents.

**2.7 Approved:** Acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

**2.8 Approved Agency:** An established and recognized agency regularly engaged in conducting tests or furnishing inspection services, when such agency is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction.

**2.9 Building:** Any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy.

**2.10 Chief Building Official:** The officer or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of Building Bylaws as adopted in their jurisdiction.

**2.11 Building Department:** Authoritative body which performs functions related to enforcement of construction bylaws and other laws.

**2.12 Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization, concerning some matter related to the department, where a response is expected.

**2.13 Construction Documents:** Written, graphic and pictorial documents prepared or assembled to describe the design, location and physical characteristics of a building project.

**2.14 Control:** The direction, regulation and coordination of procedures and related documents to assure consistency of operations.

**2.15 External/Internal Pressures and Influences:** Interference with due process of code enforcement by persons in a position of power (such as elected officials).

**2.16 Field Review:** Inspection required of material, installation, fabrication, erection or placement of components and connections requiring expertise to ensure compliance with approved construction documents and reference standards shall be conducted by Registered Professionals or by consultants approved by the Authority Having Jurisdiction.

**2.17 Heritage Buildings:** Buildings that are defined by the BCBC legally protected or officially recognized as a heritage property by the Provincial or a local government.

**2.18 Internal Quality Audits:** Internal studies to identify the extent to which documented procedures are followed and the effectiveness of current processes.

**2.19 Jurisdiction:** The geographic area over which the authority to enforce adopted bylaws is exercised.

**2.20 Management or Operational Audits:** Independent evaluations conducted by a qualified entity, at the request of the elected or appointed officials, to measure the operational consistency and overall efficiency of the department/code enforcement agency.

**2.21 Management Reviews:** Reviews performed by management of internal audit findings (including quality audits) to assess the organization's level of procedural conformance, identify and correct areas of nonconformance and inefficiency, and engage staff in improving processes and procedures.

**2.22 Permit:** An official document issued by the authority having jurisdiction which authorizes performance of a specified activity.

**2.23 Quality Assurance Plan:** Documents which set forth the policies and practices aimed at ensuring the quality of the organization's services through the observation of work in progress or sampling of completed work.

**2.24 Quality Assurance Program:** The department's system for maintaining minimum quality levels of service through a collection of self-imposed standards for activities such as internal quality audits, document creation and control, management reviews, etc.

**2.25 Registered Professionals:** Individuals registered or licensed to practice their respective design professions as defined in the BCBC as a person who is registered or licensed to practice as an architect under the Architects Act or a person who is registered or licensed to practice as a professional engineer under the Engineers and Geosciences Act.

**2.26 Service Goals:** Goals set for performance in each area of service offered by the building department. Goals must be quantified (expressed as a number, rating or grade) and established in cooperation with users of department services (citizens, architects, engineers, contractors, etc.) as well as elected and appointed officials. A system must be in place to regularly measure progress in meeting service goals. As part of this system, targets should be established for improvements in three separate areas of overall service: timeliness (turnaround time); quality (error rate); and professionalism (quality of interactions with staff [e.g., knowledge, attitude, responsiveness and helpfulness of staff members] as perceived by users of department services).

**2.27 Structure:** That which is built or constructed (see "Building").

## **3.0 CODE ENFORCEMENT—ADMINISTRATION**

Information on items noted in Sections 3.1 through 3.5 must be submitted.

### **3.1 General Information**

**3.1.1** Historical and political information on the administering entity, including: copy of charter; incorporation details, if any; copy of enabling legislation; organizational chart showing lines of authority within the jurisdiction; map showing boundaries of jurisdictional area shall be provided.

**3.1.2** Environmental and topographical information including: area (in square miles), geographical and

topographical features, wind zone, flood hazard areas, seismic or other geologic risk zone, and other local environmental health and safety concerns shall be provided.

**3.1.3** Economic and demographic information including: current residential and daytime populations; population growth trends and projections; current housing count and future-needs projection; median housing price; **property tax rate; and major contributors to local economy** (tourism, manufacturing, education, etc.) shall be provided.

### **3.2 General Operations**

**3.2.1** Department shall define its responsibility for code enforcement and administration of zoning, transportation, storm-water, floodplain management, utilities (water and sewer), landscaping, fire inspections, licensing, etc.

**3.2.2** Department shall demonstrate its participation in coordination of work if zoning, transportation, storm-water, floodplain management, fire inspections, licensing, etc., are under a separate department, and explain how these approvals are coordinated.

**3.2.3** Department shall demonstrate that its preparations are coordinated with other departments to respond after natural hazard events to identify damaged buildings and conduct safety inspections, if applicable.

**3.2.4** If there is work done on contract for other jurisdictions by local agreements, the department shall provide copies of such contracts.

**3.2.5** Department shall demonstrate the existence of policies or statutes in place which provide code officials freedom from external/internal pressures and influences (as defined in Section 2.15) that may impair the enforcement of codes.

**3.2.6** Department shall provide documented evidence of steps taken to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

**3.2.7** Department shall provide evidence of establishment of standard operating procedures; details of the process in place to control uniformity of operating procedures, procedural documents, and forms (See Section 2.14).

**3.2.8** Department shall describe accessibility of information and records, documented minimum retention times for records, and provide evidence of safe storage of records. Department shall demonstrate permanent retention of certifications required for permits issued in flood hazard areas.

**3.2.9** Department shall provide evidence of control of access to records: proof of adequate safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized access or modifications to records.

**3.2.10** Department shall provide evidence of a comprehensive quality assurance program (as defined in Section 2.24); which shall contain, at a minimum, the following components:

**3.2.10.1** Frequent quality assurance activities (as defined in Section 2.23),

**3.2.10.2** Annual, or more frequent, internal quality audits (as defined in Section 2.17),

**3.2.10.3** Management review meetings (as defined in Section 2.20).

**3.2.11** Department shall furnish copies of reports of management or operational audits (as defined in Section 2.19) conducted within the past six years, if any.

**3.2.12** Department shall provide adequate facilities and equipment to employees and contract personnel (i.e., books; manuals; and tools, gauges, meters and equipment used for plan review and inspection functions) and describe how defective equipment is replaced.

**3.2.13** Department shall describe method of identification and calibration of available tools and equipment used, as applicable.

**3.2.14** Department shall provide list of available transportation equipment and provide policies on use and maintenance.

**3.2.15** Details on relevant computer software and programs in use shall be provided.

**3.2.16** Availability of information technology (IT) support shall be demonstrated.

**3.2.17** Evidence of validation procedure for computer programs used for plan checking (e.g., hand calculations) shall be provided.

**3.2.18** Evidence of availability of, and policies guiding appropriate employee and contract personnel use of, wireless voice and data communication, such as cell phones, wireless networks, etc., shall be demonstrated.

**3.2.19** Building department's access to legal counsel and prosecution support shall be demonstrated.

**3.2.20** Awareness programs and community outreach activities shall be conducted by the department.

**3.2.21** Description of all documents available to the public through the department shall be provided.

**3.2.22** Description of innovative practices, if any, shall be provided.

**3.3 Staff Information:** The building department shall have a sufficient number of permanent staff with the range of expertise to carry out its normal functions and shall provide:

**3.3.1** An organizational chart providing employee names and titles for all full- and part-time staff positions within the building department; total number of employees.

**3.3.2** Job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions, including information on minimum qualifications, education, training, technical knowledge, skills, experience, and certification/licensing requirements.

**3.3.3** A list of additional qualification requirements over and above the provincial or local requirements, if any, such as Registered Professional license, contractor license, Certified Floodplain Manager, etc., and shall demonstrate that staff meet those additional requirements.

**3.3.4** Methods of hiring, training and supervising staff; and methods of hiring.

**3.3.5** Verification of individuals' qualifications, education, etc.

**3.3.6** Current standings, and expiration dates, of required certification(s) issued by an acceptable certification organization, as determined by local policy or provincial laws, for certified staff.

**3.3.7** At a minimum, annual staff performance evaluations for the establishment of clearly defined performance goals.

**3.3.8** Documentation and tracking of provincially and locally mandated minimum continuing education requirements; and information on jurisdictional continuing education requirements, over and above province and local minimum requirements.

**3.3.9** Demonstration of the participation of individual chief building officials, plan reviewers, and inspectors in code development activities.

**3.3.10** Training requirements for performing post-disaster assessments and making substantial damage determinations in flood hazard areas; evidence that staff has met training requirements, if applicable.

**3.3.11** Evidence of employment of adequate number of plan reviewers, by category; i.e., Part 9, Part 3, Plumbing, Electrical, etc.

**3.3.12** Information on Registered Professionals (i.e., on staff, full or part time).

**3.3.13** Documentation of an adequate number of inspectors currently employed by category; i.e., Part 9, Part 3, Plumbing, Electrical, etc.

### **3.4 Permitting Information**

**3.4.1** Process for issuance of permits shall be documented.

**3.4.2** Coordination of permitting process with internal and external government departments shall be documented.

**3.4.3** Process for establishment of permit and related fees and policies related to fee assessment and collection shall be documented.

**3.4.4** Number of permits issued in the last 12 months, by category, shall be provided for:

**3.4.4.1** Residential Permits: new, alterations, repairs, additions; single family and multifamily.

**3.4.4.2** Commercial Permits: new, alterations, repairs, additions.

**3.4.4.3** Construction Type: number of permits issued for each construction type and occupancy classification (including mixed-use occupancies).

**3.4.4.4** Permit Type: number issued by category, such as building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fuel gas, etc., or combination/master permits.

**3.4.4.5** Flood hazard areas: number of permits for new buildings and substantially improved buildings issued in the last 12 months.

**3.4.5** Area in square meters (square footage) most typical of buildings permitted in the past 12 months; area

in square meters (square footage) of the largest building permitted in the last 12 months; and story height of the tallest building permitted in the last 12 months, shall each be identified.

**3.4.6** Information on heritage buildings: details of permit process, and the number of permits issued in the last 12 months, shall be provided.

**3.4.7** Service goals for permitting shall be established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.24) and performance toward meeting stated goals shall be monitored regularly.

**3.4.8** A procedure and process for dealing with expired or inactive permits shall be in place.

### **3.5 Department Budget**

**3.5.1** Budget for code enforcement for the past fiscal year — Revenue versus Expenditure, shall be provided.

**3.5.2** Operating budget type, i.e., General Fund, other means of funding, shall be provided.

**3.5.3** Financial audit method, i.e., internal or third-party, shall be stated.

**3.5.4** Description of liability exposure, e.g., self-insured, shall be provided.

### **4.0 CONSTRUCTION CODES AND BYLAWS**

**4.1** Evidence shall be provided of adoption of current Provincial Building Code or sections thereof or the Vancouver Building By-law.

**4.2** Construction-related and building by-laws shall be provided.

### **5.0 PLAN REVIEWS**

The following information is necessary:

**5.1** Policies, procedures and checklists for plan reviews shall be documented.

**5.2** Number of reviews done annually, by category, such as residential buildings, commercial buildings, site development plan reviews, and others, such as fire sprinklers, alarms, etc., shall be tracked.

**5.3** Description of system used for tracking and coordinating plan review activities shall be provided.

**5.4** Department requirements for review of building plans for structural parameters shall be provided.

**5.5** Procedures for partial plan approvals and deferred submittals, if offered by the jurisdiction, shall be documented.

**5.6** Number of plan reviews done by department staff in the last 12 months that resulted in rejection or correction of designs: residential and commercial, shall be tracked. Number of plan reviews done by contract staff in the last 12 months, if any, that resulted in rejection or correction of designs: residential and commercial, shall be tracked.

**5.7** Typical reasons for rejections or correction of designs shall be tracked.

**5.8** Policy and procedure for approving alternate solutions shall be documented and followed.

**5.9** Service goals for plan review shall be established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.24) and performance toward meeting stated goals shall be monitored regularly. A quality (error rate) service goal with no life-safety errors shall be established.

### **6.0 VERIFICATION OF PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS/LICENSES**

Details on the following are required:

**6.1** Process for verifying builder licenses and insurance shall be documented and followed.

**6.2** Process for verification of areas of practice for registered professionals shall be documented and followed.

**6.3** Process for verification of credentials of agencies/individuals conducting field review shall be documented and followed.

### **7.0 INSPECTIONS**

The following details are necessary:

**7.1** Policies and procedures for inspections shall be documented; use of checklists or inspection results reporting software shall be documented.

**7.2** Number and types of inspections done in the last 12 months, by category, such as structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, fuel gas, fire and others, shall be tracked. Percentage of work rejected and corrected: structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, fuel gas, fire and others, shall be tracked.

**7.3** Rejections and corrections shall be tracked on an individual inspector basis.

**7.4** Typical reasons for rejections and corrections shall be tracked.

**7.5** Use of and compliance with regulatory requirements regarding field review (as defined in Section 2.16), shall be demonstrated.

**7.5.1** Use of and requirements for registered professionals and consultants shall be documented.

**7.5.2** Procedures for approving third-party inspection and testing agencies shall be documented.

**7.5.3** Field review reporting requirements, including collection of letters of assurance as required by British Columbia Building Code and applicable Building Bylaw(s), shall be documented.

**7.6** Procedures for final inspections conducted by the department shall be provided; in flood hazard areas, procedures for collection of as-built elevation certificates prior to Certificate of Occupancy shall be provided.

**7.7** Clear, concise and accurate reporting of inspection results shall be in place. Procedures to guard against the alteration of inspection report records shall be documented.

**7.8** Service goals for inspection shall be established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.24), and performance toward meeting stated goals shall be monitored regularly. A quality (error rate) service goal with no life-safety errors shall be established.

## 8.0 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Details on the following are required:

**8.1** There shall be a documented procedure in place to record, investigate and resolve, complaints against the department, and complaints involving work without permits, building bylaw violations, and other similar violations.

**8.2** There shall be evidence of the establishment of, and rules of procedure for, an appeals process.

## 9.0 CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

There shall be a documented procedure for the issuance of Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or Certificate of Completion (CC) or temporary certificate of occupancy.

## 10.0 ON-SITE EVALUATIONS AND ACCREDITATION

On-site evaluations are required to determine the degree of compliance with the accreditation criteria. A team of trained evaluators and subject matter experts, led by a certified evaluation team leader, shall visit the jurisdiction to conduct a thorough review of the organization and its code-enforcement practices. The evaluation team will interview leadership (such as mayor, city manager, city attorney, other department heads), staff, and stakeholders.

**10.1 Pre-evaluation:** Prior to scheduling the full on-site evaluation, IAS will schedule a two-day visit to the applicant building department/code enforcement agency by the lead evaluator and a subject matter expert, to review and comment on its degree of compliance with the AC251 criteria.

**10.2 Full Evaluation:** In consultation with the applicant building department, the team leader schedules the full on-site evaluation by a team of trained peer evaluators to verify compliance with the accreditation criteria. Peer evaluation procedures will be established by the IAS Board of Directors.

Upon conclusion of the on-site visit, the evaluation team leader provides the applicant agency with verbal feedback, with specific information on major nonconformances, if any. Within 30 days of the evaluation, a formal workbook is submitted to IAS by the team leader for transmission to the applicant agency.

**10.3 Follow-up Evaluation:** In some cases, the team leader may recommend to IAS that a follow-up evaluation take place to verify implementation of corrective measures taken by the applicant agency in response to the full evaluation. Typically, follow-up evaluations include the team leader and another member for one or two days on-site.

**10.4 Full Accreditation:** If the final workbook submitted by the IAS evaluation team leader indicates full compliance with requirements, the applicant agency is placed on a list for final review by the IAS Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) for issuance of the formal accreditation certificate. Accredited agencies will be subject to an on-site surveillance evaluation at the conclusion of the initial year of accreditation.

**10.5 Conditional Accreditation:** At the discretion of the ARC, conditional accreditation may be granted to an

applicant that is substantially in compliance with the accreditation criteria and that has shown evidence of a clear action plan to address unresolved evaluation comments/concerns. The terms of conditional accreditation shall be determined by the ARC. Conditional accreditation shall not exceed one year.

Agencies will be subject to an on-site compliance evaluation, at the conclusion of the year of conditional accreditation, at which time the ARC will re-evaluate the agency's accreditation status.

## 11.0 ANNUAL REPORTS AND RE-EVALUATION

To maintain accredited status, the accredited agency must, at all times, be in compliance with the rules of procedure and the accreditation criteria. Annual reports, addressing key elements of the criteria, must be prepared by the accredited agency and submitted to IAS. Submitted information must also include changes in key staff, changes in facilities or operating procedures, or any problems that could potentially impact the entity's accredited status.

At the end of every three-year term commencing from the initial date of accreditation, the accredited agency will be subject to on-site full re-evaluation by IAS. ■