

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0005

INTERPRETATION

Page 1 of 2

Interpretation Date:	February 19, 2019
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2018
Subject:	Fixed ladder and hatch location for roof area access
Keywords:	Roof access, floor areas, fixed ladder, hatch, main roof areas, roof-top enclosures
Building Code Reference(s):	3.2.5.3.(1)(b), NFPA 14

Question:

Clause 3.2.5.3.(1)(b) requires all main roof areas of buildings over 3 storeys with a roof slope less than 1 in 4, to be provided with direct access from the floor areas immediately below by means of a hatch with a fixed ladder.

1. Is it the intent of Clause 3.2.5.3.(1)(b) to require the fixed ladder and roof hatch to be located within a floor area and not within an exit stair enclosure, given that the definition of floor area excludes exits?
2. Instead of a fixed ladder and hatch located in the interior floor area to access the roof from below; is it acceptable to locate a fixed ladder at the exterior to provide access from a main roof area to another main roof area over a roof-top enclosure accessed from the main roof? For example, the roof of a penthouse, partial storey, or amenity structure is accessed from a building main roof via a fixed ladder positioned at the exterior of these roof-top enclosures.
3. What is meant by "main roof area"? For example, is the roof over a penthouse or rooftop amenity roof-top enclosure also considered a main roof area?

Interpretation:

1. No.

The intent of the Building Code is to facilitate fire fighter access to a main roof area, and minimize delay in fire fighting. Therefore, a fixed ladder and hatch should be allowed to be placed within an exit stair enclosure. It is common practice to place the fixed ladder and the hatch within an exit stairwell as it provides a protected place for firefighters to access a roof and run a firehose directly to the roof from a standpipe connection, if necessary for fire department operations. Locating the fixed ladder and hatch within the exit stair enclosure is considered to provide sufficiently direct access from the floor areas immediately below the roof areas.



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, EGBC and BOABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The Building and Safety Standards Branch, Province of BC and the City of Vancouver participate in the committee's proceedings with respect to interpretations of the BC Building Code. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the local *Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.

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Page 2 of 2

2. Yes.

A fixed ladder can be placed at the exterior of a roof-top enclosure to provide access from one main roof area to an upper main roof area as the roof exterior is open vented, thus providing a degree of safety for firefighter access intended by the Building Code. The location of the fixed ladder to the upper main roof area should be visually apparent or sufficient signage provided at the access to the first encountered main roof area.

3. The term 'main roof area' should apply to any roof over any floor area that is part of a storey. It should not be assumed that roofs above roof-top enclosures can be reached by firefighters using a portable ladder, as this could unnecessarily delay firefighter access. Roof-top enclosures exempted by Sentence 3.2.1.1.(1) from being considered a storey are not considered to require such facilitated fire fighter access to their roofs, unless such roof-top enclosures are of a significant size or occupy an area equal to the storey below. An example of this is a large service room at the top of a hospital or laboratory building.



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