

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0032

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date:	January 21, 2020
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2018
Subject:	Guards for Exterior Stairs Adjacent to Windows in a Dwelling Unit
Keywords:	Guard, height
Building Code Reference(s):	9.8.8.1.(1),(6) & (7), 9.8.8.3.(3) & (4)

Question:

This project is a Part 9 residential building that contains an exterior stair that serves a single dwelling unit. This stair is adjacent to an exterior window of the dwelling unit.

1. Is a guard required between the exterior stair and the adjacent window?
2. If so, can the guard be 900 mm high?

Interpretation:

1. Yes (with conditions)

Clause 9.8.8.1.(1)(a) requires a guard on each side of a stair that is not protected by a wall when the difference in elevation between the walking surface (i.e. the stair tread) and the adjacent surface (i.e. the interior floor level of the dwelling unit adjacent to the stair) is more than 600 mm. If this difference in elevation exceeds 600mm, a guard would be required.

Except as permitted by Sentence 9.8.8.1.(7), Sentence 9.8.8.1.(6) requires that when glazing is installed adjacent to a stair, ramp or landing, and the glazing extends lower than 1070 mm above the walking surface of the stair treads, the glazing must be protected with a guard that is 1070 mm high. Alternatively, the window itself can be non-openable and be designed to resist guard loading as required by Article 4.1.5.14.

2. Yes (with conditions)

The exception to Sentence 9.8.8.1.(6) in Sentence 9.8.8.1.(7) states that “in dwelling units” the height of such a guard can be lowered from 1070 mm to 900 mm. The term “in dwelling units” implies that this exception only applies to interior stairs, which is not consistent with the requirements of Article 9.8.8.3. for height of exterior guards.



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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Sentence 9.8.8.3.(3) states that exterior guards that serve a single dwelling unit can be 900 mm high when the potential fall is less than 1800 mm.

Sentence 9.8.8.3.(4) states that, **except for required exit stairs**, the height of guards at flights of steps in both interior and exterior stairs can be 900 mm.

In order to be consistent with the requirements of Articles 9.8.8.1. and 9.8.8.3. the protection of the glazing adjacent to an exterior stair with either a guard or a non-openable window that is designed to resist guard loading can be 900 mm high, provided that the exterior stair is not a required exit.



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