

# BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing  
**AIBC, EGBC, BOABC**

**File No: 18-0114**

**INTERPRETATION**

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Interpretation Date:	July 20, 2021
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2018
Subject:	Secondary Suite Second Means of Egress via Window
Keywords:	Secondary suite, means of egress, window
Building Code Reference(s):	9.9.9.1.(2), 9.9.9.2.(2), 9.9.9.3.(2) & (3), 9.9.10.1

## Question:

With respect to means of egress from a basement secondary suite which is part of a single family dwelling:

1. Can a window with unobstructed opening not less than 1m high and 0.55m wide, located so that the sill is not more than 1m above the floor; be used as the required second means of egress for the basement secondary suite, which is served by an egress door opening into exterior means of egress?
2. If the answer to question 1. is yes, are there any restrictions as to where the window can be located in relation to the egress door? In other words, is it intended that the window used for escape be located away from the egress door such as in at a bedroom, or can it be located close to the required egress door?

## Interpretation:

1. Yes.

For an unsprinklered building, Sentence 9.9.9.2.(2) permits using an openable window sized and located in accordance with Clauses 9.9.9.1.(2)(a) and (b), to be used as a second and separate means of escape where it may not be possible to go in more than one direction from where the egress door opens onto an exterior means of egress (dead end condition). Such escape windows must be provided for each storey of each unit.

If the building is sprinklered, the building code does not require the ability to go in more than one direction to an exit from the location where the egress door opens onto a public corridor or exterior passageway (dead end condition). In this case the windows used for escape are not required.



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 9.9.9.3.(2) requires that in a house with a secondary suite, if a dwelling unit is located above another dwelling unit or common space, the upper dwelling unit must be provided with a second and separate means of egress where an egress door from that dwelling unit opens onto an exterior passageway, that

- a) has a floor assembly with a fire-resistance rating less than 45 min,
- b) is served by a single exit stairway or ramp, and
- c) is located more than 1.5 m above adjacent ground level.

Shared interior exits must be enclosed in accordance with Sentence 9.9.4.2.(2).

Shared exterior exits must be protected for exit exposure protection in accordance with Subclause 9.9.4.4.(1)(a)(ii).

2. No.

Where a window designed in accordance with Clauses 9.9.9.1.(2)(a) and (b) is used as an escape window in accordance with Sentence 9.9.9.2.(2) in an unsprinklered building, there are no restrictions on the location of the window in relation to the egress door to the unit.

However, considering that the window is intended to be a second means of escape, it is good design practice for the window to be remotely located from the egress door.

Article 9.9.10.1 requires that if the unit is unsprinklered, each bedroom must have one outside window or exterior door to be used for escape.



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