

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing

AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0128

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: July 20, 2021

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2018

Subject: Fuel Fired Appliances on Balconies

Keywords: Fuel fired, appliances, balconies, roof decks

Building Code Reference(s): 3.6.1.5., 10.2.3.2.(1)(a) & (i), 2.4.3.3. of BCFC

Question:

1. Are fossil fuel fired barbeques, patio heaters and fire pits permitted on balconies and roof decks, including ones with natural gas connections?
2. If so, do the requirements of Article 3.6.1.5. regarding clearances to property lines and adjacent walls apply?

Interpretation:

1. Yes (with some exceptions)

Sentence 10.2.3.2.(1) regulates several devices, including space-heating equipment and appliances, with respect to “total energy use intensity”, but this Sentence applies to “conditioned space”.

“Conditioned space” means any space within a building the temperature of which is controlled to limit variation in response to the exterior ambient temperature by the provision, either directly or indirectly, of heating or cooling over substantial portions of the year.

Since exterior balconies and roof decks are not “conditioned spaces”, the requirements of Sentence 10.2.3.2.(1) do not apply. The BCBC does not address the energy consumption of fossil fuel fired barbeques, patio heaters and fire pits permitted on balconies and roof decks.

Many local fire departments consider fossil fuel fired appliances on balconies and roof decks to be a serious fire hazard, particularly in combustible buildings. NFPA’s report entitled “Home Grill Fires” estimates that grills, hibachis and barbeques result in an average of 10,600 home fires per year in the USA with an average annual death total of 10 persons per year,



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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160 civilian injuries and \$149,000,000 in direct property damage. 56% of such fires originated on exterior balconies, terraces and patios. As a result, many local fire departments discourage the use of fossil fuel appliances on balconies and roof decks.

Article 2.4.3.3. of the BC Fire Code states that “*Devices having open flames shall be securely supported in noncombustible holders and shall be located or protected so as to prevent accidental contact of the flame with combustible materials*”. Although this Article does not ban the use of fossil fuel appliances, it does provide a cautionary guidance on their use.

It is good practice to have a fire extinguisher readily available in close proximity to the fossil fuel appliance.

Section 2.2. of the BC Building Act provides the authority to local governments to make bylaws or other enactments with respect to conservation of energy and reduction of greenhouse gases.

This means that local governments could enact bylaws to ban the use of fossil fuel appliances based on wasteful energy consumption. Designers should consult with the local authority having jurisdiction in this matter.

It should be noted that the Article 10.2.2.22. of the Vancouver Building By-Law bans the use of fossil fuel fired exterior heating appliances.

2. No (with some exceptions)

The requirements of the BCBC apply to equipment and appliances that are fixed in place. The BCBC does not regulate portable equipment and appliances, even those that are connected to a permanent natural gas outlet.

The clearance requirements of Article 3.6.1.5. do not apply to fossil fuel fired portable equipment and appliances, but does apply to fixed built in equipment and appliances that form part of the building.



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