


BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, POABC

File No: 12-0068

INTERPRETATION

Page 1 of 2

Interpretation Date:	January 19, 2016
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2012
Subject:	Fire Department Access to Buildings Separated by Firewalls
Keywords:	Fire Department Access, Firewall
Building Code Reference(s):	3.1.10, 3.2.1.2., 3.2.2.10.(1), 3.2.4.2, 3.2.5.4, 3.2.5.5, 3.2.5.6, 9.10.20.3
Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If a firewall separates two adjoining Part 3 buildings so that each is considered as a separate building for application of Building Code requirements, is each building required to face a street for fire department access?2. Does the answer to question 1 depend on whether there is a public corridor connecting the buildings through the firewall?3. Does the answer to question 1 depend on whether the adjoining buildings are different construction classes, such as one building requiring noncombustible construction while the other is permitted combustible construction?4. Is the answer for question 1 different for Part 9 buildings?
Interpretation:	<p>1. Yes, if the building is more than 3 storeys in building height or more than 600 m² in building area.</p> <p>A firewall or firewalls conforming to Subsection 3.1.10 can divide a project into two or more buildings. This may allow less stringent construction requirements to be applied to the smaller separated buildings than to a larger building without firewalls.</p> <p>Sentence 3.2.2.10.(1) requires every building to face a street in conformance with the requirements of Articles 3.2.5.4 and 3.2.5.5 for access routes. Article 3.2.5.4 requires access routes for fire department vehicles to buildings that are more than 3 storeys in building height or more than 600 m² in building area. Where Article 3.2.5.4 requires fire department vehicle access routes, they are required to conform to Article 3.2.5.5. The principal entrance and any access openings (if required) must be between 3 m and 15 m from the access route.</p>  R. J. Light, Committee Chair
<p>The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, and POABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. 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 <i>Authority Having Jurisdiction</i>. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.</p>	

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, POABC

File No: 12-0068

INTERPRETATION

Page 2 of 2

Sentence 3.2.5.5.(4) refers to a portion of a building that is completely cut off from the remainder of the building so that there is no access to the remainder of the building. In that situation, access routes are required so the distance from a fire department vehicle to an entrance of each portion of the building is not more than 45 m. This requirement applies to cut-off portions of a building, not to an entire building.

Article 3.2.1.2 allows a basement used primarily as a storage (parking) garage to be considered as a separate building for the purposes of the construction requirements of Subsection 3.2.2. This allows the different structures above such a basement to be considered as separate buildings for the purposes of Subsection 3.2.2, including where those structures are separated by firewalls into two or more buildings. Because the requirement for each building to face a street is in Subsection 3.2.2, it also applies to separate buildings above a common basement parking garage.

It is important to note that the "street" required for fire department vehicle access does not have to be a public street. A private roadway or yard conforming to Articles 3.2.5.5 and 3.2.5.6 meets the requirements for access.

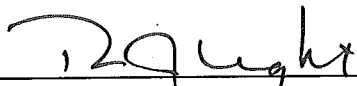
2. No.

The requirements apply whether or not there is a public corridor connecting the buildings separated by firewalls. However, Article 3.2.4.2 requires that, in most cases, a single fire alarm system must serve buildings on both sides of a firewall if there are openings through the firewall other than for services. If a public corridor connects buildings with doorway openings through a firewall, it may be acceptable to designate a main fire department response point for the buildings so that a fire alarm annunciator and fire department pumper connection (if applicable) are provided only at the main response point, subject to agreement by the authority having jurisdiction.

3. No.

4. Yes.

For Part 9 buildings, Article 9.10.20.3 requires only that access for fire department equipment be provided to each building by means of a street, private roadway or yard. There are no specific criteria for the distance between the principal entrance and the access route.



R. J. Light, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, and POABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. 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.