

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 12-0132

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: December 9, 2018

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2012

Subject: Live/work units

Keywords: Live/work

Building Code Reference(s): 3.1.3.1., 3.1.3.2., 3.2.3., 3.3., 3.4., 3.7., 3.8., 6.

Question:

Live/work units are typically residential units having additional space designed for non-residential uses which are an integral extension of the occupants' unit to allow for work activities. Such areas may sometimes allow for visitors, customers or additional work staff. How are such live/work units addressed in the Building Code?

Interpretation:

Live/work units are not addressed in the Building Code. There are however some other jurisdictions that have addressed live/work units to some extent in their Zoning and Development Bylaws and local Building Bylaws/Codes, examples being City of Vancouver (for artists live/work units) and Ontario. It is suggested a Building Code analysis and assessment of the specific live/work design be undertaken, which would address the following specific Building Code issues:

1. Occupancy classification. For the non-residential uses the range of occupancy type can range from something relatively benign such as small scale cooking demonstration space to more hazardous activities such as welding shop. The range of possible uses may be narrowed down by reference to local Zoning and Development restrictions or the project Development Permit regulating the allowable uses of the live/work units. In some cases the non-residential activity can be considered integral or subsidiary to the residential use, and in other cases may need to be considered a separate major occupancy entirely.
2. Size. Criteria such as size of the various uses, or the percentage of non-residential versus the residential should be evaluated.
3. Occupancy separations. The necessity for occupancy separations will depend on the occupancy classifications and nature of risk posed to the residential use, or vice versa.
4. Spatial separation and exposure protection. For work spaces involving retail or industrial uses there may be additional exposure impacts requiring further analysis.



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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5. Means of egress. Evacuation risks and how egress from the residential or non-residential spaces performs, must be evaluated.
6. Special hazards. Non-residential uses must be evaluated for special hazards regulated by the BC Fire Code, NFPA standards, etc. Note that there may also be other regulatory agencies with other regulations involved such as health and environmental control authorities, WorkSafe BC, Technical Safety BC, etc.
7. Ventilation. Ventilation design must also consider the non-residential use, and the interface between residential and non-residential may need to be considered.
8. Accessibility provisions. The non-residential portion of the live/work unit is not typically exempt from accessibility provisions, and must be designed accordingly.
9. Washroom provisions. The non-residential portion of the live/work unit will require washrooms if intended for visitors, customers or additional work staff, and must also be designed for accessibility.
10. Other design disciplines. Coordination with other design disciplines such as building envelope, structural, mechanical/plumbing, fire suppression, electrical, etc, will be necessary.



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