

# BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

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

**File No: 18-0253**

**INTERPRETATION**

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Interpretation Date: October 17, 2023

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Subject: Fire Separation of a Service Room in a House with a Secondary Suite

Keywords: Service Room, Secondary Suite, Fuel-Fired Appliance

Building Code Reference(s): 9.10.9.14.(4), 9.10.10.3., 9.10.10.4., 9.10.19.5.(2)

## Question:

In a house with a secondary suite, is a fire separation required for a service room where the service room serves both suites?

The answer depends on the type of service room, the size of the house, the type of smoke alarms, and whether the house is sprinklered.

Sentence 9.10.10.3.(1) requires a 1 h fire separation for service rooms but Sentence 9.10.10.3.(2) waives this requirement for rooms that contain a limited quantity of service equipment and where the equipment does not constitute a fire hazard. This exception would apply to most service rooms in houses except rooms that contain fuel-fired equipment. There are separate requirements for fire separations of service rooms containing incinerators, but it is assumed that an incinerator will not be located in a house.

Sentence 9.10.10.4.(1) requires a 1 h fire separation for a service room containing fuel-fired appliances, with exceptions as stated in Sentence 9.10.10.4.(2). Unless otherwise required by the appliance installation standards referenced in the BCBC, Sentence (2) waives the requirement for the fire separation if the fuel-fired appliance serves not more than one room or suite, or a house with a building area of not more than 400 m<sup>2</sup> and a building height of not more than 2 storeys. If the house does not meet these exceptions, the service room requires a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating not less than that required for the fire separation between the dwelling units or common spaces. Sentence 9.10.9.14.(4) requires a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating of 0 h to 45 min depending on whether the house is sprinklered or on 8888he type of smoke alarms.



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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The requirements for the fire separation of a service room in a house with a secondary suite are summarized below.

Where a service room contains a limited quantity of service equipment and the service equipment does not constitute a fire hazard:

- The service room does not require a fire separation.

Where a service room contains fuel-fired appliances:

- A fire separation is not required if the appliances serve only one room.
- A fire separation is not required if the appliances serve only either the main dwelling or the secondary suite.
- A fire separation is not required if the appliances serve a house with a secondary suite with the building area of 400 m<sup>2</sup> or less and the building height of 2 storeys or less.
- If the fuel-fired appliances serve a house with a secondary suite and the building area exceeding 400 m<sup>2</sup> or with a building height of more than 2 storeys:
  - A fire separation with a minimum 0 h fire-resistance rating is required if the house is sprinklered.
  - A fire separation with a minimum of 15 min fire-resistance rating is required if the house is not sprinklered but all smoke alarms in the house are photo-electric and interconnected as described in Clause 9.10.19.5.(2)(a), i.e., so that actuation of any one smoke alarm will cause all smoke alarms in the house to sound.
  - A fire separation with a minimum of 30 min fire-resistance rating is required if the house is not sprinklered but an additional photo-electric smoke alarm is installed in each suite as described in Clause 9.10.19.5.(2)(b), i.e., at least one additional smoke alarm is installed in each suite, interconnected so that actuation will also cause the additional smoke alarm(s) in the other suite to sound.
  - A fire separation with a minimum 45 min fire-resistance rating is required if the house is not sprinklered, and smoke alarms are not installed and interconnected as described above.

Also, note that appliance installation standards are referenced in Sentences 6.2.1.5.(1), 9.33.5.2.(1) and 9.33.5.3.(1) of the BCBC. These standards may contain additional requirements for fire separation of service rooms.



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