

# BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

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

**File No: 18-0302**

**INTERPRETATION**

**Page 1 of 2**

Interpretation Date: February 13, 2024

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2018

Subject: Separation Distance Between Exits in an Open Floor Area

Keywords: Exit, Floor Area

Building Code Reference(s): 3.4.2.3, A-3.4.2.3.(1)

## Question:

Two exits in an open floor area are located to satisfy the separation distance requirement between exits. One of the exit doors leads into an exit corridor but there is also another exit door into the same exit corridor, and it is closer to the other remote exit. Does this additional door into the exit corridor affect compliance with the separation distance requirement for the other 2 exit doors?

## Interpretation:

No.

In a floor area that does not have a public corridor, Clause 3.4.2.3.(1)(b) requires that the least distance between 2 exits in a floor area shall be one half the maximum diagonal dimension of the floor area, but not less than 9 m. There are exceptions in Sentence 3.4.2.3.(2) but they are not applicable in this case. Sentence 3.4.2.3.(3) states that this minimum distance shall be the shortest distance that smoke would have to travel between the exits, assuming smoke will not penetrate an intervening fire separation.

Clause 3.4.2.3.(1)(b) requires a separation distance between 2 exits, not between each possible combination of 2 exits. The intent statement for Sentence 3.4.2.3.(1) notes that the intent is to limit the probability that exits will be located too close to one another, which could lead to persons not having a choice of an alternative egress route in the event that one route to the exits is blocked or obstructed in a fire situation.



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.

# BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

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

File No: 18-0302

INTERPRETATION

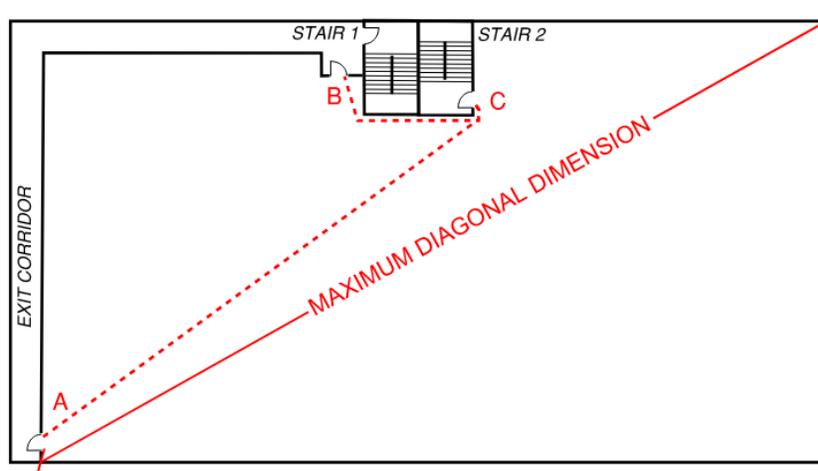
Page 2 of 2

Where there are more than 2 exits from a floor area, only 2 of the exits need to meet the separation distance requirement. If there are other exits in the intervening distance between the 2 widely separated exits, those other exits do not affect persons having a choice of travelling to the farther exit. The arrangement with the exits in the intervening distance will comply directly with Clause 3.4.2.3.(1)(b) and also with the intent statement, provided the 2 widely separated exits comply with Clause 3.4.2.3.(1)(b). This is further stated in Note A-3.4.2.3.(1), excerpted below.

**A-3.4.2.3.(1) Least Distance Between Exits.** The least distance measurement does not apply to each combination of exits on a multi-exit storey. It only applies to at least 2 of the required exits from that storey.

It does not matter if an exit in the intervening space between 2 widely separated exits leads into the same exit corridor as one of the 2 widely separated exits. This additional door into the exit corridor does not affect the separation distance between the widely separated exits.

In the sketch below, the maximum diagonal dimension is measured as the greatest horizontal distance across the floor area. As defined in the BCBC, "floor area" excludes exits. The distance between exit doors A and C is more than half of the maximum diagonal dimension, and therefore the exit separation distance is code compliant. The distance between doors B and C is not relevant.



*Patrick Shek*

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.