

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 24-0125

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: January 20, 2026

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2024

Subject: Exterior Exit Route to a Public Thoroughfare

Keywords: Exit, Public Thoroughfare, Sliding Gate

Building Code Reference(s): Division A - 1.4.1.2

Questions:

1. Where an exit from a building discharges to an exterior fenced area, can the only access from the fenced area to a public thoroughfare be through a large sliding gate?
2. Do all of the exit requirements apply to the exterior route between the exterior open space and the public thoroughfare?

Interpretation:

1. Yes, with conditions.

The BCBC definition of “exit” is reproduced below:

Exit means that part of a means of egress, including doorways, that leads from the floor area it serves to a separate building, an open public thoroughfare, or an exterior open space protected from fire exposure from the building and having access to an open public thoroughfare. (See Note A-1.4.1.2.(1).)

Various types of secured facilities can have large fenced areas that extend a significant distance away from the building. Such an area can be “an exterior open space protected from fire exposure from the building”, and the means of egress from the building can lead to this exterior space. The exterior open space requires an access to an open public thoroughfare, but in accordance with the BCBC definition this access is not part of the exit. The exit terminates at the exterior open space. The BCBC requirements for exits do not apply to the gate leading out of the exterior open space.



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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This exterior space must have sufficient area to accommodate building occupants from the exits discharging to the space. Also, the exterior space must be a sufficient distance from the building so that all occupants are protected from the exposure from the building. The required distance can vary considerably depending on the size, construction, and use of the building. Determining the required distance requires considerable judgment on the part of the designer and the authority having jurisdiction.

Acceptability of the exterior open space should be reviewed with the authority having jurisdiction at an early stage in the design. When agreed upon, the acceptable exterior open space should be clearly identified in the building's fire safety plan.

2. No.

The BCBC requirements for exits are applicable to the length of the exit route, which terminates at the exterior open space as stated in the interpretation for Question 1. The requirements for exits are not applicable to the route from the exterior open space to the public thoroughfare.

Acceptability of the access from the exterior open space to the public thoroughfare should be reviewed with the authority having jurisdiction at an early stage in the design.

Refer also to the BC Appeal Board ruling BCAB 1766.



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