


BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 24-0104

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date:	April 21, 2026
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2024
Subject:	Concrete Columns for Part 9 Buildings
Keywords:	Concrete, columns, pier type foundations
Building Code Reference(s):	9.3.1.1. to 9.3.1.9., 9.15.2.3.(3), 9.17.1.1., 9.17.2.2., 9.17.6.
Question:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can an unreinforced pier-type foundation be used to support an exterior wood deck serving a Part 9 single family dwelling where the underside of the deck is 2100 mm above adjacent ground level and the concrete pier extends from a solid bearing surface to the underside of the deck?2. Can a concrete column be used in lieu of the pier type foundation described in Question 1?
Interpretation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Yes – with conditions. Sentence 9.15.2.3.(3) states that for pier type foundations that are used to support the applied loads from a 1 storey superstructure, the height of the piers is limited to 3 times the least dimension at the base of the pier. The minimum size of the pier would be $2100 \text{ mm} / 3 = 700 \text{ mm}$ (either circular or square). The NBC 2020 Part 9 User Guide clarifies that the height of the pier is measured from grade to the top of the pier.2. Yes – with conditions. Article 9.17.6. does not have any prescriptive requirements for the height of solid concrete columns. Sentence 9.17.1.1.(1) provides limitations on when Section 9.17. can be used for the design of columns, but it does not address the height of unreinforced solid concrete columns. <p></p> <hr/> <p>Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair</p>
<p>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 <i>Authority Having Jurisdiction</i>. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.</p>	

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Sentence 9.17.1.1.(2) requires columns be designed to Part 4 when the limitations of Sentence 9.17.1.1.(1) are exceeded, which would require a registered professional with training and experience in structural design.

Sentence 9.17.2.2.(2) requires columns be laterally supported to resist racking except for columns not more than 600 mm measured between the finished ground to the underside of the joists and support a deck with no superstructure. The column of 2.1 m in height would require lateral support, however, there is no prescriptive requirements on how to provide lateral support. The NBC 2020 Part 9 User's Guide provided some direction on providing lateral support.

Sentence 9.17.6.1.(1) requires materials for solid concrete columns be designed to Section 9.3. Sentence 9.17.6.2.(1) requires solid concrete columns to be not less than 200 mm by 200 mm for rectangular columns and 230 mm diameter for circular columns, but this Sentence does not address the maximum height of solid concrete columns.

Sentence 9.3.1.1.(2) requires unreinforced and nominally reinforced concrete columns be designed to Articles 9.3.1.2. to 9.3.1.9., but none of these Articles address the height of unreinforced solid concrete columns. Sentence 9.3.1.1.(3) requires reinforced concrete columns to be designed to Part 4, which would require a registered professional with training and experience in structural design.

Since the maximum height of unreinforced or nominally reinforced solid concrete columns is not addressed in Part 9, the design of such columns is beyond the scope of Part 9.

Subclause 2.2.7.1.(1)(c)(i) of Division C states that structural components that are not within the scope of Part 9 require the design and field review of such components be provided by a registered professional.

Unreinforced, nominally reinforced and reinforced solid concrete columns must be designed by a registered professional, except for pier-type foundations described in Question 1.



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

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