



Advisory

July 26, 2016

Subject:

Fire alarm pull stations in main floor suites of multi-family buildings

Advisory:

It is the interpretation of the Chief Building Official that, in the Alberta Building Code (ABC) 2014, fire alarm pull stations are not required at suite egress doors that lead directly outside at ground level in multi-family buildings. Examples of these installations are found in townhouses constructed at the base of high-rises and in main floor or basement suites of low-rise multi-family buildings.

Background:

At issue is the interpretation of the wording of the clause regarding fire alarm pull stations. The same clause appears in the ABC 2006, ABC 2014, National Building Code (NBC) 2010 and NBC 2015. The specific clause is 3.2.4.6.(1)(b) of the ABC 2014, which essentially says that a fire alarm pull station is to be installed in "every floor area near every exit". To date, our interpretation has been that every swinging door to an exterior patio can be an exit door.

The National Research Council has advised The City that the intention of this section of the code is to only require fire alarm pull stations at those doors designated as exits. This designated exit would also have to meet all other requirements of an exit as well, such as an exit sign.

Additionally, a fire alarm pull station is not required at suite egress doors that lead directly outside at ground level because:

- There is no guarantee that a pull station will be used, even when it is installed by a designated or required exit.
- A pull station in a suite may have window coverings on it that are generally provided for privacy of the suite.
- The building has sprinklers and is equipped with other types of fire detection, so there is still time to take other action when outside, since exit time is minimal for one suite.

This change in interpretation will not affect existing projects; the existing interpretation applied will not be considered incorrect. A pull station may still be installed on the main floor level at an exterior door that is not designated as an exit and does not have the remaining appurtenances of an exit. For projects in the plans examination stage, contact the safety codes officer to discuss the application of this interpretation. For projects under construction, consult the field safety codes officer to discuss the application of this interpretation.

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