

April 20, 2015

## ***Changes Anticipated in the 2014 Alberta Fire Code***

In advance of the publication of the 2014 Alberta Fire Code, expected before May 1, CHBA – Alberta has reviewed available information and compiled a list of anticipated changes that may be of interest to residential construction. For some items, there is a link between fire and building code, with the construction requirements (where and how many) contained in the building code and additional provisions for maintenance, etc. in the Fire Code.

### **1) Fire Safety Plans for Construction, Demolition or Hot works**

The 2010 National code changes which have been adopted by Alberta, focused on fires at construction and demolition sites. Many of these have already been instituted in the Alberta Building and Fire codes and encompass rules for spatial separation and protection during construction. One key component of the Fire Code changes were fire safety plans. Alberta introduced these provisions in [Standata FCI-09-03 "Fire Safety Plan – Construction and Demolition Sites"](#) to Alberta in November of 2009:

These rules will progress in the Alberta Fire Code for 2014 to require not only a fire safety plan for a construction site but to have the plan ***accepted in writing by the fire department AND the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). A hot works safety plan will also need to be accepted*** in writing by the fire department and the AHJ prior to the commencement of Hot Work.

It is the intent of the change to provide each fire department with the opportunity to administer this in a manner that best fits their operational model. As noted in Standata FCI-09-03 a municipality could accept a standard Fire Safety Plan from a contractor for a specific timeframe or area or, depending upon the size and complexity of a site, require a very site specific Fire Safety Plan for construction and demolition. The examples contained in the Standata are likely still useful as well.

In the case of hot works, it is the intent of the change to both:

- require this as part of the overall Fire Safety Plan as above;
- have tradespersons/companies who engage in Hot Work outside of the normal "construction site" such as a plumber doing repairs, have standard Fire Safety Plan that the fire department/AHJ has accepted.

This change is seen as an important area for connecting the contractor to the fire department and an opportunity for education.

#### **Code References:**

- AFC 5.6.1.3 (1) sentence 1) for new buildings**
- AFC 5.6.1.3 (2) sentence 2) for existing buildings**
- AFC 5.6.1.3 (2) sentence 3) for hot works**
- Appendix note A-5.6.1.1 and A- 5.6.1.6**

## 2) Additional Items for Hot Works

The definition of “hot works” has been clarified to mean tools that emit open flames or sparks, and expanded to recognize other types of operations capable of generating fires. It includes the recognition of torch applied roofing membranes or adhesive bonding as a risk.

New code requirements restrict the use of bitumen kettles on roofs and require these kettles to be equipped with a tightly fitted metal cover and maintained with no excess residue.

**Code Reference: 2014 AFC Division B 5.2.1**

## 3) Additional Requirements for Residential and Personal Service Occupancies: 6-Storey Wood Construction

These new requirements apply to group C occupancies (residential) with increased areas (see ABC 3.2.2.51) and group D occupancies (business and personal services ABC 3.2.2.59) and were created mainly to deal with 6-storey wood structures. The Fire Code changes are related to site protection, firefighting access and disposal of combustible materials on site. Other changes related to the construction are contained in the Building Code. It includes specifics on:

- a) Fencing
- b) Smoking area requirements where smoking permitted
- c) Disposal chutes non-combustible or terminate minimum 2m above the receptacle
- d) Disposal bin minimum 3m from an exit
- e) Addressing signage on the access route, and signs at stairs on each floor
- f) Firefighting water supply must be available as soon as combustible materials arrive on site
- g) Hydrant access minimum 2m all around and equipped with signage
- h) A construction stairway required to meet minimum code requirements

**Code reference: 2014 AFC Division B 5.6.3**

## 4) Smoke Alarms

Changes have been made to the location, installation, interconnection and type of smoke alarms for dwelling units in Part 3 and Part 9 of the **Building** Code and will come into effect with the Alberta Building code with a transition period to November 1, 2015.

An appendix note in the 2014 Alberta **Fire** Code links to these and asks that smoke alarms exceeding a height of 3 metres have a remote testing capability.

**Code References: 2014 AFC Division B**

## 5) Fire Alarms (ABC Part 3 Part 9 and AFC)

Most of these requirements apply to large multi-family dwellings. Fire alarm changes contained in the Building Code are referenced in the Fire Code. Fire alarm changes include detector placement, and increased audibility.

Fire Code deals with commissioning all life safety systems as if they were one system instead of commissioning each life safety system individually.

Currently anywhere a sprinkler system is installed a fire alarm system must be installed. In the 2014 AFC this was relaxed so that a fire alarm system will not be required if the sprinkler is installed to NFPA 13 D; Monitoring for flow and shut off and smoke alarms are still required. There is also a clarification to ensure that fire detectors are placed in shafts where sprinklers are not installed.

Additional information is available through an [on-line presentation](#) created by the National Codes Centre.

## **6) Exit Signs**

Exit signs have new pictograms, colours and are required to be photo luminescent. The requirements for these are contained in the Building Code with a cross reference to them in the Fire Code.

**Code Reference: 2014 AFC Division B 2.7.3.1**

## **7) Upgrading of Existing Secondary Suites**

A revision for existing secondary suite requires carbon monoxide alarms and provides the option to sprinkler the furnace room in lieu of required fire separation. There are also requirements for inspection, testing and maintenance of CO alarms

**Code References: 2014 AFC Division B 2.16.2.13**

## **8) Annual Smoke Detector Sensitivity Testing**

Smoke detector sensitivity testing on an annual basis is noted in the Can/UL standard that is referenced in the Alberta Fire Code for inspection and testing of fire alarms systems. The change in this code is to remove the reference in the standard to annual testing for smoke detectors. Alberta does not require annual testing, rather testing is only required when a detector is found to be non-functioning. This change codifies the exception noted by a current STANDATA. The STANDATA would be re-issued as an information bulletin explaining the exception.

**Code Reference AFC Division B 6.3.1.7**

## **9) Storage of Recycled Material**

Revision of the storage of recycled materials and collection receptacle size and locations to reflect current best practices.

**Code Reference: AFC 2014 Division B 2.1.3.3**

## **10) Appendix Note Revision – Fire Separations**

A reference will be made to NFPA 80 to provide additional information on the inspection, testing and maintenance of closures in fire separations.

**Code References: 2014 AFC Appendix A, Division B article 2.2.2.4**

## 11) Care Occupancies

A new occupancy classification for residential care facilities has been created (Group B3 occupancy) that provides requirements for smaller care occupancies having a limited number of occupants. New construction, sprinkler, emergency power and fire alarm requirements were added.

Additional information is available through an [on-line presentation](#) created by the National Codes Centre.

**Code References: 2014 AFC Division B Part 2**

***This list will be posted on the CHBA – Alberta website in the member's site under Building Technology, [Codes 2014](#) and will be revised and updated as additional information becomes available.***

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