



2019 Alberta Codes

What You Need to Know



OVERVIEW

New Alberta Building, Fire and Energy Efficiency Codes have been approved and come into effect on April 1, 2019. The 2019 editions of the Alberta Building Code, the Alberta Fire Code and the 2017 National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB) have been adopted by provincial regulation on February 12, 2019.

The Building Code Regulation adopts two codes:

- National Building Code – 2019 Alberta Edition
- National Energy Code for Buildings – 2017 Edition

The Fire Code Regulation adopts:

- National Fire Code – 2019 Alberta Edition

While the new codes come into force on April 1, 2019 there is a **6 month transition period**, ending on September 30, 2019, to facilitate transition to the new codes from the previous codes. The transition period will apply to the Building Code and the Energy Code for Buildings so that existing construction and plans are not unreasonably disrupted. The new edition of the fire code applies to construction under the new building code.

TRANSITION PERIOD

There are three conditions that allow for construction to proceed under the previous building code edition when the National Building Code – 2019 Alberta Edition comes into effect (becomes law):

1. If construction has been permitted by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) and is underway, this construction is to proceed under the previous building code edition. Unless an unsafe condition exists in the opinion of the AHJ, construction in progress is not required to be updated to the new building code. The person having care and control over the construction (i.e. contractor) may choose to update to the new building code edition.
2. There is a six-month transition period related to building permits once a new building code edition comes into effect. Construction may continue under the previous building code edition if the AHJ received the building permit application prior to the new building code edition coming into effect for a period of up to six months from the coming into effect date. For example, as the coming into effect date of the National Building Code – 2019 Alberta Edition is April 1, 2019, the building permit application shall be received by the AHJ (i.e. municipality) prior to October 1, 2019, for construction to be allowed under the Alberta Building Code 2014 edition. At any time during this six-month period, a person may choose to construct to the new building code edition. New Alberta Building, Fire and Energy Efficiency Codes.

3. If the AHJ is satisfied that the preparation of plans and specifications for the project began prior to April 1, 2019 and the AHJ receives the building permit application prior to October 1, 2019, construction is allowed under the Alberta Building Code 2014 edition. The person having care and control may also choose to change their plans and specifications to meet the new building code edition.

These transition periods also apply to Section 9.36 energy efficiency for housing and small buildings under the National Building Code – 2019 Alberta Edition and the National Energy Code for Buildings - 2017 Edition.

CODES – WHEN AND WHERE YOU CAN GET THEM

You can't.... at least not yet, but that's not necessarily bad news.

On February 28, 2019, the Government of Canada confirmed funding, proposed in the [2018 Fall Economic Statement](#), to support ongoing and future building code development work. This funding will allow [National Research Council](#) (NRC) to continue to support the building code development system and to provide free access to the national model codes. Starting in spring 2019, NRC will offer free online access to the [National Building Code](#) (NBC), the [National Fire Code](#) (NFC), the [National Plumbing Code](#) (NPC), and the [National Energy Code for Buildings](#) (NECB), as well as the provincial codes published by NRC. Paper copies of the Codes, along with other supporting documents including the Guides, will be offered at a reduced cost. Due to these changes, longer term subscriptions are not currently available.

Then when?

More information on the availability of the free codes should be available sometime in April. There will be no enforcement of the new Alberta codes until they are actually available. **Members are encouraged to postpone code purchases of the Alberta and National building, plumbing, fire and energy efficiency codes until they are freely available online from the NRC site.**

TRAINING

The province has said that mandatory code update training is not required for updates to the 2019 Alberta editions of the National Building Code and National Fire Code or to the 2017 edition of the National Energy Code for Buildings.

That doesn't mean code training will not be available.

BILD Alberta is working on a number of educational initiatives for members including:

- Documents outlining key changes members should be aware of and how they could impact you;
- Visiting local association to provide Presentations and discussions on the new Alberta Codes; and
- Hosting web-based information sessions for members who can't attend the local presentations.

If there is something you would like to see BILD Alberta offer, [please reach](#) out and let us know.

Municipal Affairs is also planning on providing additional code information sessions and guidance documents including Alberta specific updates over the coming months.

KEY CHANGES INCLUDED IN THE 2019 CODES

There will be more than 600 changes in the new codes, some of the most significant are:

- **6-Storey Combustible Construction**
 - Allowing the construction of 6-storey residential, business and personal services buildings using traditional combustible construction materials.
- **Sprinkler Systems**
 - Higher standards for automatic sprinkler systems to allow for the construction of six-storey buildings.
- **Earthquake Loads and Effects**
 - A provision that all buildings in Canada will now be designed for earthquake forces regardless of the level of hazard.
 - Prescriptive solutions for all areas in Canada.
 - Increase in Seismic loads in Alberta.
- **Snow Loads**
 - Snow load data from the national climate data archive led to changes in the 50-year values.
 - Both increases and decreases in various areas across Alberta.
- **Water-use Efficiency**
 - New flow rates in lavatory supply fittings, kitchen supply fittings and shower heads to reduce water usage in buildings
 - Maximum water usage in litres per flush for water closets and urinals.
- **Stairs**
 - An increased run dimension of steps inside houses from the current minimum of 210 mm to a new minimum of 254 mm, for safety.
 - For dwelling units and other Part 9 Bldgs, there is a change introduced to permit the use of spiral stairs in some cases.
 - Mixed treads between floor levels allowing stair flights where both tapered and rectangular treads can be used.
 - Relaxed restrictions on climbability to provide flexibility and choice to use ornamental guards in certain applications, such as where the elevation difference is not more than 4.2 m or one storey.
- **Low-Permeance Materials**
 - Added a revised exemption in locations with HDD \leq 6000.
- **Main entrance doors**
 - Relaxes the requirements for main entrance doors that are protected from precipitation.
- **Microwave ovens and range hoods**
 - Exempts microwave ovens and range hoods from the clearances specified above a cooktop.

- **Airborne sound transmission**
 - Introduces a new metric called Apparent Sound Transmission Class (or ASTC). It is the sum of all flanking sound transmission paths (indirect paths) and the direct sound transmission path. ASTC better relates to what is heard by the occupant.
 - No changes to the level of performance.
 - Provides 3 compliance paths; Measurement, Look up tables, or the NRC web application [soundPATHS](#).
- **Roofing, waterproofing and dampproofing**
 - CGSB Material Standards
 - Many of the CGSB standards referenced for Roofing, dampproofing and waterproofing materials and installation applications were either withdrawn by CGSB, outdated, or obsolete.
 - Deleted obsolete standards and replaced with ASTM standards where acceptable.
 - Kept CGSB standards where no replacements are available.
 - CGSB Installation Standards
 - Deleted outdated standards and replace with prescriptive requirements.
- **Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS)**
 - Adds references to three ULC standards dealing with materials, installation and design for EIFS in Part 9.
 - Keeps the current compliance route through building envelope design in Part 5.

This is not an exhaustive list of changes and only highlights some of the key changes in the new codes.

Alberta Municipal Affairs has posted a [new power point presentation](#) of the changes in building and energy codes.

NRC has a summary of [significant technical changes](#) in the 2015 editions of Codes Canada Publication.

FUTURE CODES

The province has made the timely adoption of future codes a priority.

What does that mean?

Under timely adoption new codes and standards will be adopted automatically upon their publication and will come into effect on the first day of the month after 12 months from the date of publication. This will apply to the 2020 publication of the national building, fire, plumbing and energy efficiency codes. So for example, if the 2020 National Building Code is published on November 30, 2020, it would automatically come into force in Alberta on December 1, 2021. This is to allow industry and other stakeholders to plan for when the codes come into effect, and be able to prepare and train for any changes to the codes ahead of time.

While code changes will continue to be reviewed by Municipal Affairs and the Safety Codes Council during the normal 5-year cycle between national code editions, this change will put an increased importance in the national code development process and public consultations.

The next editions of the national codes in 2020 are expected to include provisions to allow for climate change and to introduce Energy Step Codes. The Government of Canada has announced it will spend an additional \$40 million over five years to integrate climate resilience into building design guides and codes. The 2020 national codes are also expected to include Energy Step Codes, either as part of the National Building Code, or as a companion piece to that code and would outline mandatory incremental increases in energy efficiency, leading to all new homes being required to be Net-Zero Ready for 2030.

The next public consultation for changes to the National codes is scheduled for fall 2019.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Matthew Armstrong:

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