

*TECHNICAL  
REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
SECONDARY SUITES*



**THE CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**BUILDING DIVISION**

511 ROYAL AVENUE, NEW WESTMINSTER  
604-527-4580

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SECONDARY SUITES**

1. Construction of a secondary suite or the alterations to an existing building to accommodate a secondary suite after July 6, 1998 shall comply with the B.C. Building Code.
2. Every secondary suite that existed prior to July 6, 1998 must comply with the following Minimum Health and Life Safety Requirements:

### **MINIMUM HEALTH AND LIFE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

- .1 Hot and cold running water.
- .2 Toilet, basin, and bath tub/shower are required in the washroom.
- .3 Kitchen with provisions for cooking, cleaning, and storage.
- .4 Heating system capable of maintaining a minimum temperature of 22 °C during the heating season.
- .5 Windows shall conform to the applicable parts of Section 9.7 of the Code.

**Note:** Bedroom windows must provide an unobstructed opening of not less than 15” (380 mm) in height and width and 3.8 ft<sup>2</sup> (.35 m<sup>2</sup>) in area, and the bottom of the opening must not be more than 4’-11” (1.5 m) above floor level.

- .6 Minimum height in a Secondary Suite shall be 6’-7” (2.0 m) over the required area with localized depressions such as doors, beams, duct drops, etc. to be 6’-4” (1.93 m). Areas over and above the required areas are permitted to have less than those prescribed provided it is not part of the means of egress or does not constitute a hazard.
- .7 Additional interconnected hard-wired smoke alarms of the photo electric type are required in the Suite **and** the Principal Dwelling Unit.
- .8 Secondary Suites shall maintain a minimum 25-minute fire separation from the principal residence (i.e. minimum 1/2” drywall on both sides of stud surfaces and on the underside of floor joists).
- .9 An exit must be provided directly to the exterior unless a shared exit that is fire separated is provided. Exits are not permitted through a garage or service room. Exit enclosures must maintain a minimum 25-minute fire separation. Doors contained within the fire separation must be solid core or listed and must be self-closing.

- .10 Stair width shall be a minimum of 2'-10" (860 mm) with a rise and run configuration which conforms to the Type II stair requirements as specified in Section 9.8 of the Code.
- .11 Combustible drain waste and vent piping must be enclosed by a minimum of 1/2" drywall and is **not allowed** to penetrate the drywall.
- .12 Forced air heating and ventilation systems **are not permitted** to interconnect the Principal Dwelling Unit and the Secondary Suite unless:
  - a) listed smoke dampers are installed in the plane of the fire separation or supply ducts (maximum 20 in<sup>2</sup>/130 cm<sup>2</sup> in area) are located not more than 1.2m above the floor level and
  - b) activation of smoke alarms/detectors in the suite or in the principal dwelling unit will cause the heating system to shut down.
- .13 The following third party inspections are required:
  - a) Gas fired furnace installation/operation to be inspected and passed by a qualified heating contractor or the Provincial Gas Safety Branch (Tel. 604-660-8650).
  - b) Electrical service panel(s), wiring, and appliances in the Secondary Suite to be inspected and passed by a licensed electrical contractor or the Provincial Electrical Safety Branch (Tel. 604-660-9433).
- .14 Any serious health or life safety matters observed during the inspection must be rectified to the satisfaction of the Building Inspector.

\* Note: These requirements have been modified from those specified in Section 9.36 of the B.C. Building Code 2006 in order to reduce the impact on existing single detached dwellings while still maintaining the life and fire safety provisions of the Building Code.

Any enquiries related to the interpretation of these requirements should be directed to the Development Services Department, Building Division, at 604-527-4580.