

Construction of a Secondary Suite must comply with Section 9.37 of the BC Building Code, whether this construction be a renovation, an addition to an existing building, or a new building that incorporates a Secondary Suite. The following information is intended to assist in understanding the requirements for creating a Secondary Suite **in an existing house**. Detached accessory buildings used as residential suites (garden suites & carriage houses) must meet the applicable standards appropriate for a single family dwelling, which **are not addressed** in this document.

In order for an additional dwelling unit within an existing house to be approved as a Secondary Suite under the BC Building Code, the requirements of the City of Duncan Zoning, Flood Designation and Off-Street Parking Bylaws must be met as follows:

1. The Secondary Suite is in a house (single-family dwelling), i.e. not in buildings of mixed use (commercial, industrial, etc.) or buildings of multi-residential use (duplex, etc.).
2. The area of the Secondary Suite must be between 33m² (355 sq ft) and 85 m² (915 sq ft) of finished living area with a maximum of two bedrooms.
3. The area of the Secondary Suite cannot exceed 40 percent of the total floor area of the building it is located (the floor area of the building includes the suite but does not include attached storage garages).
4. Under the Condominium Act a Secondary Suite cannot be subdivided from the building it is part of.
5. The Secondary Suite must be located above the flood elevation or incorporate authorized floor area developed prior to adoption of the suites bylaw.

The following are excerpts from the BC Building Code on Secondary Suites. This information is intended to assist in assessing the basic health and safety requirements for a Secondary Suite in a house and may not contain all applicable requirements contained in the BC Building Code.

Fire Separation Information

Fire Separations for Exits

9.37.2.7

- (1) Every exit other than an exit doorway shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by a fire separation (except when the building is sprinklered):
 - a) having a fire-resistance rating of 45 minutes, or
 - b) having a fire-resistance rating of 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms as referenced in Article 9.37.2.19.

Openings Near Unenclosed Exit Stairs and Ramps

9.37.2.8

- (1) Where an unenclosed exterior exit stair or ramp provides the only means of egress from a dwelling unit in a building that contains a Secondary Suite and is exposed to fire from unprotected openings in the exterior wall of another fire compartment, the openings shall be protected (with wired glass in fixed steel frames or with glass block).

Separation of Residential Suites

9.37.2.15

- (1) Dwelling units in a building which contains a Secondary Suite shall be separated from each other by the following:
 - a) a fire separation (having a 45 minute fire resistance rating for a one storey unit or a one-hour fire resistance rating for a two storey unit).
 - b) a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms in conformance with Article 9.37.2.19., or
 - c) a fire separation having no required fire resistance rating where the building is sprinklered.
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Separation of Public Corridors**9.37.2.16**

- (1) A common corridor serving a building which contains a Secondary Suite shall be separated from the suites by the following:
 - a) a fire separation (having a 45 minute fire resistance rating for a one storey unit or a one-hour fire resistance rating for a two storey unit).
 - b) a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms as indicated in Article 9.36.2.19, or
 - c) a fire separation having no required fire resistance rating where the building is sprinklered.
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Safety**Bedroom Windows****9.9.10.1**

- (1) Except where the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom shall have at least one outside window or exterior door openable from the inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge and without the removal of sashes or hardware.
 - (2) Such windows shall provide an unobstructed opening of not less than 380 mm (15") in height or width and .35 m² (55. sq. inches) in area and maintain such an opening during an emergency without the need for additional support.
 - (3) Special requirements apply to windows opening into a window well.
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Travel Distance to Exit or Egress Doors**9.37.2.10**

- (1) In a building which contains a Secondary Suite, the travel distance from a floor level in a dwelling unit to an exit or egress door may exceed one storey provided the floor level within the dwelling unit is served by an openable window to 9.9.10.1.
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Shared Egress Facilities**9.37.2.11(2)**

- (1) Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a second and separate means of egress or an opening window conforming to Sentence 9.37.2.10 where the egress door from either dwelling unit opens onto an exit stairway which serves both suites, a public corridor servicing both suites and served by a single exit stairway, exterior passageway or balcony serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway.
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Smoke Alarms**9.37.2.19**

- (1) Except as permitted in Section (3), an additional smoke alarm of photo-electric type conforming to CAN/ULC-S531 "Standard for Smoke Alarms", shall be installed in each suite.
 - (2) Smoke alarms required in Sentence (1) shall be interconnected so that the activation of the additional alarm in one suite will cause the additional alarm in the other suite to sound.
 - (3) The additional interconnected smoke alarm is not required to be installed in each suite provided:
 - a) the fire separations have a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes or greater, or
 - b) the building is sprinklered.
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Plumbing and Heating**Combustible Drain, Waste and Vent Piping****9.37.2.14**

- (1) Combustible drain, waste and vent piping is permitted to be located within or penetrate a fire separation required to have a fire-resistance rating provided:
 - a) except for the permitted penetration in clause (b), the combustible piping is located within an assembly protected by a membrane of a minimum 12.7 mm gypsum board,
 - b) the pipe must be tightly fitted in the opening in the gypsum board (firestopped),
 - c) the combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board protection membrane on the underside of a horizontal fire separation.
 - (2) Combustible drain, waste and vent piping enclosed in an assembly or protected as described in Sentence (1) is permitted on both sides of a fire separation.
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Air Ducts and Fire Dampers**9.37.2.17.**

- (1) Where a heating or ventilation duct system serves more than one suite, the system shall be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a duct-type smoke detector.
- (2) Ducts penetrating fire separations need not be equipped with fire dampers provided they are noncombustible and all openings in the duct system serve only one fire compartment.

Room / Egress Dimensions**Height of Rooms or Spaces****9.37.2.1.**

- (1) The minimum height of rooms or spaces in a Secondary Suite shall be not less than 2.0m (79 inches) in most finished living areas and the connections between them. The area at this height shall be the lesser of the entire space or a minimum of the following:

Living space - 10.0 m²Dining space - 5.2 m²Kitchen space - 3.2 m²Master bedroom space - 4.9 m²Other bedroom space - 3.2 m²Bathroom space - 2.2 m²

Exit Stairs**9.37.2.3.**

- (1) Exit stairs within or serving a building, which contains a Secondary Suite, shall:
 - a) have a minimum width, measured between wall faces or guards of not less than 860 mm (34 inches), and
 - b) conform with the following stair requirements:

Minimum	rise: 125 mm (5 inches)	run: 210 mm (8 3/8 inches)
Maximum	rise: 200 mm (7 3/4 inches)	run: 355 mm (14 inches)
Minimum	tread depth: 235 mm (9 3/8 inches)	

Means of Egress**9.37.2.6.**

The width of every common corridor that serves a building that contains a Secondary Suite shall be not less than 860 mm (34 inches).

Doors in a Means of Egress**9.37.2.9.**

- (1) Every exit door or door that opens into or is located within a public corridor or other facility that provides access to exit from a suite shall:
 - a) be not less than 1980 mm (78") high, and
 - b) have a clear opening of not less than 800 mm (31.5"), and
 - c) be permitted to swing inward.

Spatial Separations

Exposing Building Face of Houses**9.37.2.19.**

- (1) Window openings in the exposing building face shall not be permitted if the limiting distance (generally the distance to the property line) is less than 1.2 m (4') and shall be limited in conformance with the requirements for unprotected openings in Article 9.10.14.4 (which allows a percentage of the wall area to be used for windows) where the limiting distance is 1.2 m (4') or greater.
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