

Report to the Technical Research Committee

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Fire and Buildings in Alberta

In June, through the Risk Management Committee of Municipal Affairs, an agreement was reached between the municipalities of Edmonton, Calgary, CHBA - Alberta and the Urban Development Institute to begin work on a provincial solution to the 10 minute response time issue. In view of this decision Municipal Affairs met with the municipalities in July and a meeting with Municipal Affairs and the Industry was slated for September but postponed. Due to the change-over of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Premier in Alberta, this meeting is still on hold.

Meanwhile AHITC discussed the inclusion of the appendix note from the national code. That note would allow fire department response to exceed ten minutes in new subdivisions if legal agreements are in place to construct fire stations to serve the area. This same issue was debated by the Building Technical Council in 2009 and resulted in STANDATA 06-BCI-025. This STANDATA states that calculations must be based on the existing firefighting facilities and resources of the municipality, not upon future plans. The province feels it is unlikely that the appendix note will be adopted.

AHITC has created a task group to look at a wood-based equivalent to gypsum. The working group involves the municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary, the provincial fire and building administrators, builder representatives from Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and the APA Engineered Wood Association. Issues that need to be considered are durability, permeability, and whether coatings should be applied to the inside or outside face of the sheathing.

CHBA - Edmonton Region continues to look at the effect of basement windows on fire spread.

The City of Calgary will submit a national code change proposal to remove the 10-minute response time rule. CHBA - Alberta members of AHITC will review this proposal and form their position on the issue.

The decision by the City of Calgary is not to implement mandatory sprinklers, but to work with the industry to encourage it as an option in new homes and to pursue this issue through the national code change process.

Alberta Building Code 2012/13

Over 100 Alberta-specific code change proposals will be included in the Alberta public review. Due to the political situation, the timing of the public review is not certain. Municipal Affairs was considering shortening the length of the review period to less than 3 months in order to finish it by the end of the year. The AHITC committee expressed concern with this, as it takes time to mobilize the industry to respond. CHBA - Alberta will be assembling a team of representatives from each CHBA local to review and provide comments on proposals of interest when the review opens.

An item around the graspability of hand rails is currently under appeal by several parties and is flagged for consideration under a STANDATA.

CHBA - Alberta will be polling various locals and municipal plans examinations groups to see if the lateral bracing and tall wall guidelines are being utilized by builders. If they are, they will be revised for the next code cycle.

Mandatory Warranty

On August 18 the Alberta Government held the second consultation in Edmonton on mandatory new home warranty. The government outlined a proposed warranty package with a baseline of 1 year workmanship and materials, 2 years on major systems, 7 years on building envelope and 10 years on major structural defects. The 7 year period for building envelope was hotly debated. There were also discussions around issues such as limits for multi-family buildings, owner-builder coverage, renovation warranty and exemptions in relation to condo conversions. Additional meetings took place in September with various stakeholders around the outstanding items. A ministerial report was slated to go to the government in the fall, but this may be delayed with the change in the conservative leadership that will result in changes throughout the government.

New Building Envelope Course

The Safety Codes Council of Alberta has added a mandatory building envelope course to the training for safety codes officers (SCOs). This course will be mandatory for re-certification and for new SCOs. It is also available to the industry as an on-line, webinar or paper-based course at a cost of \$400. This course has a greater emphasis on codes in comparison to the Moisture Technician Course.

Fencing of Residential Construction Sites

Due to a fire in Auburn Bay in Calgary in July, the City of Calgary is meeting with the industry to look at site fencing for residential homes under construction.