

SECONDARY SUITES

All work to meet the requirements of the Alberta Building Code.

General

A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling unit that is located within a primary dwelling unit, where both dwelling units are registered under the same land title.

Means of Egress

The dwelling unit shall be provided with at least one exit that leads directly to the outside.

Protection of Exits

Every exit shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by a continuous smoke tight barrier of ½" thick gypsum wallboard on each side of the walls, ceiling and underside of stairs.

Exit Doors

Every exit door, or door that provides access from a secondary suite, shall be not less than 78" high and not less than 32" wide. The exit door is permitted to swing inward.

Common Entry Doors

Doors in common entry ways must be solid-core wood doors at least 45mm thick, and have a self-closing device.

Exit Stairs

Exit stairs shall have a clear width of not less than 34".

Unenclosed Exterior Stair or Ramp

Where an unenclosed exterior exit stair or ramp provides the only means of egress from a secondary suite, and is exposed to the hazards of fire from unprotected openings in the exterior wall, the opening shall be protected.

Height Over Stairs

The clear height over the stairs in a secondary suite shall not be less than 77", and not less than 73" when the stairs are located under beams and ducting.

Handrails

The height of handrails measured vertically from the tread nosing shall be not less than 34" and not more than 38".

Guards

Guards for flights of stairs shall be not less than 36" high when measured vertically from the tread nosing. Openings in guards shall not be more than 4" and designed to not facilitate climbing.

Height of Rooms and Spaces

The height of rooms or spaces in a secondary suite shall be not less than 77" and not than 73" under beams and ducting

Door Heights

Doors within dwelling units shall be not less than 74^{1/2}" high.

Bedroom Windows

Each bedroom within a secondary suite shall have at least one outside window that has an unobstructed opening of not less than 540 square inches with no dimension less than 15". A clearance of not less than 30" to be provided in front of an egress window opening into a window well.

Dwelling Unit Separations

The secondary suite shall be separated from the dwelling unit with a continuous smoke tight barrier of ½” thick gypsum wallboard on the ceiling and on each side of the walls. Common walls and floor to ceiling separations shall be filled with 150mm thick insulation and have sound bar installed to achieve an STC rating of 43.

Doors in a Smoke Tight Barrier

Doors in a smoke tight barrier are required to be solid-core wood doors at least 1 ¾” thick with a self-closing device.

Furnace Room Separations

A furnace room shall be separated from the remainder of the secondary suite with a continuous smoke tight barrier of not less than one layer of ½” thick gypsum wallboard on the ceiling and on each side of the walls.

Heating and Ventilation Systems

Each dwelling unit shall have an independent heating and ventilation system.

Smoke Alarms/Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Smoke alarms are required on each floor level in a dwelling unit, common spaces in a house with a secondary suite, and in each bedroom. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors shall be installed by permanent connections to an electrical circuit and wired so that activation of one alarm will cause all alarms within the dwelling units to sound. CO alarms are required on each floor level

Plumbing

Dwelling units shall be equipped with plumbing facilities. Back-flow prevention is required between suites.

Electrical

Electrical installations shall conform to the electrical regulations made pursuant to the Safety Codes Act.

Inspections Required

1. Pre-Construction
2. Pre-Drywall
3. Final prior to occupancy

NOTE: permits and inspections are required for applicable work including electrical, gas, plumbing, fireplaces, and ventilation

Further Information:

www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/codesandpermitsafetytips