



BC Building Code and the Architects Act Explained

This document explains how buildings are classified in BC Building Code (BCBC), and when BCBC is triggered (when a building or plumbing permit is required). Also included is a brief history regarding the Architects Regulation, National Building Code and BC Building Code

History of the Architects Regulation, National Building Code, and BC Building Code

The Architects Act was enacted in BC in 1930. This was before the National Building code or BC Building code existed. The Architects Act determines when an Architect required (See attached Bulletin 31 buildings requiring service of an Architect). The Architects Act was repealed in 2023 and replaced with the Architect Regulation.

- The Architects Regulation is in effect today and Local Governments have a duty to enforce the Act (Langford Decision <https://aibc.ca/2021/07/bc-court-of-appeal-confirms-langford-decision/#:~:text=In%20May%202020%2C%20the%20chambers,a%20relevant%20law%20respecting%20safety>)
- The architect not only designs the area and space of a building but also designs life safety aspects of the building in relation to the occupants using the building. This includes fire separations, fire resistance ratings, means of egress (exiting the building), travel distance to exits, emergency lighting, exit signs, design of handrails, guards, stairs, ramps, seating, etc.
- The National Building Code of Canada was first published in 1941 and is still published today. When Provincial building codes are enacted they are modeled after the National Building Code with site specific changes regarding wind, rain and snow load, seismic conditions, and for BC, Energy Step Code.
- BC Building Code was adopted in 1985 and is updated after the National Building Code is updated (roughly every 4-5 years)

What is Part 3 and Part 9 of BC Building Code?

Division A 1.33 Application of Division B: Buildings under BC Building Code fall under either Part 9 or Part 3 of BCBC.

Part 9

Part 9 buildings are 3 stories or less in building height, having a building area less than 600 square metres in building area and consist of the following occupancies:

- Group C, residential occupancies
- Group D, business and personal services occupancies
- Group E, Mercantile occupancies,
- Group F, Division 2 and 3 medium and low hazard industrial occupancies.

Part 3

When a building falls under Part 3 of BCBC it also falls under parts 4,5, and 6 of BCBC. These buildings require professional plan certification from Architects and Engineers.

Part 3 buildings are:

- Post disaster buildings (hospitals, fire halls, water treatment plants, etc)
- Major occupancies classified as:

- Group A, Assembly occupancies
- Group B, Care, Treatment or Detention occupancies
- Group F, division 1 high hazard industrial occupancies

Or

- Buildings exceeding 600 square metres in building area or over 3 stories in building height used for major occupancies classified as:
 - Group C, residential occupancies
 - Group D, business and personal services occupancies
 - Group E, Mercantile occupancies,
 - Group F, Division 2 and 3 medium and low hazard industrial occupancies.

What are these different parts of BC Building Code part 3 part 9, etc?

BCBC is divided into Division A, B, C and different parts in each division.

Division A speaks to compliance, objectives, and functional statements.

Division B of BCBC speaks to the acceptable solutions and is laid out as follows:

- Part 1 Acceptable solutions this includes objectives and functional statements
- Part 2 Reserved (nothing in this section)
- Part 3 Fire Protection, Occupant Safety, and Accessibility
- Part 4 Structural Design
- Part 5 Environmental Separation
- Part 6 HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning)
- Part 7 Plumbing
- Part 8 Safety Measures at Construction and Demolition Sites
- Part 9 Housing and Small Buildings
- Part 10 Energy Efficiency

Division C speaks to Administrative Provisions

When is a building permit required?

Under section 1.1.1.1 of Division A in BCBC a building permit is required for the following buildings that are 10 square metres (108 square feet) or larger:

- The design and construction of a new building
- The occupancy of any building
- A change in occupancy of any building
- An alteration of any building
- An addition to any building
- The demolition of any building
- The reconstruction of any building that has been damaged by fire, earthquake or other cause
- The correction of an unsafe condition in or about any building
- All parts of any building that are affected by a change in occupancy
- The work necessary to ensure safety in parts of a building
 - That remain after a demolition,
 - That are affected by but that are not directly involved in alterations, or
 - That are affected by but not directly involved in additions,
 - The work necessary to ensure safety in a relocated building during and after relocation
 - Safety during construction of a building, including protection of the public
 - The design, installation, extension, alteration, renewal or repair of plumbing systems

- The alteration, rehabilitation and change of occupancy of heritage buildings.

Authority Having Jurisdiction

The City of Dawson Creek Building Department is the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) within the City of Dawson Creek.

Role of the Architect and Engineers

As noted, the architect not only designs the area and space of a building but also designs life safety aspects of the building in relation to the occupants using the building. This includes fire separations, fire resistance ratings, means of egress (exiting the building), travel distance to exits, emergency lighting, exit signs, design of handrails, guards, stairs, ramps, seating, etc.

Professional Engineers for building construction consist of the following disciplines: geotechnical, structural, mechanical, plumbing, fire suppression, and electrical.

Below is a link to the free PDF version of the 2024 BC Building Code:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/construction-industry/building-codes-standards/bc-codes/2024-bc-codes#Access-the-codes>

Links to Architects Regulation and Langford Decision

- Architects Regulation: Reserved Practice of Architecture <https://www.aibc.ca/?file=45692>
- Langford Decision <https://aibc.ca/2021/07/bc-court-of-appeal-confirms-langford-decision/#:~:text=In%20May%202020%2C%20the%20chambers,a%20relevant%20law%20respecting%20safety>