

SEPARATION OF SUITES IN STRIP MALLS

DISCUSSION

Sentences 3.3.1.1.(1) and 9.10.9.13.(1) specify that suites of business and personal services occupancy (i.e. a lawyer's or dentist's office) must be separated from suites of mercantile occupancies (i.e. a retail clothing store) by a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating of 1 hr for Part 3 buildings and 45 min for Part 9 buildings.

Sentence 3.3.1.1.(3) gives an exemption to the fire-resistance rating required between suites of business and personal services occupancy, fast food vending operations that do not provide seating for customers, and suites of mercantile occupancy. Sentence 9.10.9.13.(2) gives the same exemption in Part 9 buildings for suites of business and personal services occupancy and suites of mercantile occupancy.

In both of these cases, the occupancies are located in a sprinklered mall which is served by a public corridor that is more than 5 m in unobstructed width and does not serve an institutional occupancy or a residential occupancy (see Clause 3.3.1.4.(4)(b)).

Many smaller malls, commonly referred to as "strip" malls, do not include an enclosed public corridor as each suite exits directly to the outside. In these cases, must suites of business and personal services and mercantile occupancies be separated from each other by fire separations in accordance with Sentence 3.3.1.1.(1) or 9.10.9.13.(1)?

CODE REFERENCES

1. Article 3.3.1.1. states:

1) Except as permitted by Sentences (2) and (3), each *suite* in other than *business and personal services occupancies* shall be separated from adjoining *suites* by a *fire separation* having a *fire-resistance rating* not less than 1 h. (See also Subsection 3.3.3. for *care or detention occupancies*, Article 3.3.4.2. for *residential occupancies* and Article 3.1.8.7. for *fire dampers*.)

2) The *fire-resistance rating* of the *fire separation* required by Sentence (1) is permitted to be less than 1 h but not less than 45 min provided the *fire-resistance rating* required by Subsection 3.2.2. is permitted to be less than 1 h for

- a) the floor assembly above the *floor area*, or
- b) the floor assembly below the *floor area*, if there is no floor assembly above.

Unless stated otherwise, all Code references in this STANDATA are to Division B of the Alberta Building Code 2006.

3) Occupancies that are served by *public corridors* conforming to Clause 3.3.1.4.(4)(b) in a *building* that is *sprinklered* throughout, are not required to be separated from one another by *fire separations* provided the *occupancies* are

- suites of business and personal services occupancy*,
- fast food vending operations that do not provide seating for customers,
- suites of mercantile occupancy*, or
- any combination of these occupancies.

2. Sentence 9.10.9.13.(1) states:

1) Except as required in Article 9.10.9.14. and as permitted by Sentence (2), each *suite* in other than *business and personal services occupancies* shall be separated from adjoining *suites* by a *fire separation* having a *fire-resistance rating* of not less than 45 min.

2) In *sprinklered buildings*, *suites of business and personal services occupancy* and *mercantile occupancy* that are served by *public corridors* conforming with Clause 3.3.1.4.(4)(b) are not required to be separated from each other by *fire separations*.

VARIANCE

In a strip mall, *suites of business and personal services occupancy* and *suites of mercantile occupancy* are not required to be separated from each other by fire separations, provided:

1. The building does not exceed one (1) storey in building height,
2. The building has an automatic sprinkler system that meets the requirements of 3.2.5.13.(1),
3. The building has a fire alarm system that meets the requirements of Sentence 3.2.4.5.(1),
4. Each suite is served by not less than two (2) exits which lead directly to the exterior, and
5. Except as permitted by item 6, the building does not contain a residential occupancy or an institutional occupancy.
6. Where the building contains a daycare facility, the suite containing the daycare facility must be separated from the remainder of the building by a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating not less than 2 hr.

This VARIANCE is applicable throughout the province of Alberta.