

Recycling Programs

Issue:

The present requirements within the Alberta Fire Code (AFC) regarding combustible recyclable materials does not reflect the changes that have taken place in the recycling industry and society in general.

Background:

In response to concerns regarding the accumulation of combustible recyclable materials the Alberta Fire Code 1992 introduced a number of requirements on the size and construction of containers for combustible recyclable materials; location of such containers; the number of permitted containers; and when such containers were to be emptied.

The requirements were introduced at a time when recycling was in its infancy and a major concern was the accumulation of large quantities of combustible material, particularly waste paper, combined with smoking in the workplace.

With the advent of smoking restrictions in a number of municipalities and in 2008 a Province wide ban on smoking in all buildings accessed by the public and the recycling of a greater number of items consideration needs to be given to some of the problems now being encountered.

Code requirement: ¹

2.4.1.3. Waste Receptacles

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5) Except as permitted in Sentence (6), receptacles for combustible recyclable material having a capacity greater than 0.125 m³ used within a building shall be

- a) of noncombustible, fully enclosed construction with a tight-fitting lid, or
- b) located in a storage room conforming to Article 2.4.1.2.

6) Receptacles for the collection of combustible recyclable materials are permitted provided they

- a) conform to CAN/ULC-S102, "Method of Test for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials and Assemblies," and
- b) have a flame-spread rating not more than 150 on any exposed surface.

¹ All references are to the Alberta Fire Code, Division B, unless otherwise stated

7) Unless acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction, only one receptacle for combustible recyclable materials per suite shall be permitted.

8) Receptacles for combustible recyclable material shall be emptied when full or at least weekly.

9) Receptacles for combustible recyclable material shall not be placed in rooms or areas where smoking is permitted unless the receptacles are noncombustible with a tight-fitting lid. (See Appendix A.)

A-2.4.1.3.(9) Containers for combustible recyclable material should not be located in areas where there is the likelihood of sources of ignition being introduced to the contents. Lunch rooms, coffee rooms and staff lounges are building areas where persons congregate and, in some cases, are permitted to smoke. This creates a potential hazard that can be reduced by prohibiting the containers. If containers are necessary in these areas, they should be noncombustible with suitable covers or lids that would contain the outbreak of fire.

Recommendations:

Containers for combustible recyclable material shall not be located in a manner that will obstruct an exit or access to any fire protection equipment.

Containers shall be of a size that permits them to be easily emptied and shall be emptied as per the requirements of the AFC.

The number and type of containers shall not exceed the fire load for which the floor area was designed.

The containers shall be constructed of materials that are suitable for the products they contain and do not degrade in use.

The use of containers shall be monitored to avoid unsafe conditions.