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Secondary Suites

Issue:

Questions have been raised concerning the application of the Alberta Fire Code (AFC) to existing secondary suites prior to December 31, 2008.

The secondary suite requirements from the AFC come into force on December 31, 2008 and apply to existing buildings. These amendments apply to a dwelling unit that contains living accommodations being used as a secondary or basement suite.

Requirements in the Alberta Building Code for secondary suites have been adopted and came into force on December 31, 2006, and apply to all new construction.

Interpretation:

This Interpretation Bulletin supports the intent to give owners of existing secondary suites time to bring their properties into compliance with the AFC requirements; however, the provisions of the Safety Codes Act also give the authority having jurisdiction discretionary powers to alleviate any safety concerns they may have with existing secondary suites. Some or all of the secondary suite requirements from the AFC may be used to bring an existing secondary suite to an acceptable level of safety prior to the December 31, 2008 effective date.

It should be noted that owners are responsible to obtain any necessary permits issued by the authority having jurisdiction for construction or renovation approvals. Municipalities should apply the AFC requirements as a minimum standard to upgrade existing secondary suites. These requirements are not intended to be used for major renovation or retrofit projects where other Codes may apply.

Additional Information:

Anyone requiring further information can contact Safety Services at 1-866-421-6929.

For details on requirements pertaining to the upgrading of secondary suites in existing buildings, please refer to the AFC.