

TO: ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1992 MARCH 16

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING
AND BUILDING

SUBJECT: B.C. BUILDING CODE 1985 - ARTICLE 9.8.4.2. - REQUIRED
LANDINGS

PURPOSE: TO INFORM COUNCIL OF THE METHODS BY WHICH THEY MAY
SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY MRS. K. MCBURNIE TO
REQUIRE THE CONSTRUCTION OF LANDINGS AT THE TOP OF
STAIRWAYS WITHIN DWELLING UNITS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council authorize the Chief Building Inspector to write a letter to the Building Standards Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs Recreation and Culture concerning the requirement for landings at the top of stairways within dwelling units.
2. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mrs. K. McBurnie at #503, 7210 Mary Avenue Burnaby, B.C. V5E 3K4.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND:

This report is in response to Council's request for information arising from a presentation at the regular Council Meeting of 1992 March 02 from Mrs. Kathleen McBurnie regarding amendments to the Building Code which would require the construction of landings on stairways.

A letter supporting the initiative by Mrs. Kathleen McBurnie toward changing the B.C. Building Code to require the construction of a landing at the top of stairways was submitted on 1991 November 22 to the Mayor by Mr. Howard Riddel, Coordinator of Services for the Canadian National Institute for the blind.

On behalf of Mrs. McBurnie, the Building Department prepared a letter dated 1992 January 31, addressed to the Building Inspectors Association of B.C. This letter was submitted by the Chief Building Inspector to the executive of the Building Inspectors Association at their meeting of 1992 February 01, with a request for comment and support.

Subsequent to the B.I.A.B.C. executive meeting of 1991 February 01, the President, Mr. Casey Van den Broek, sent a reply dated 1992 February 17, to Mrs. McBurnie. This letter essentially acknowledged confusion created by the present code wording, and confirmed support for clarification of this issue. The Association forwarded a copy of Mrs. McBurnie's letter to the Building Standards Branch and the Association's representative on the Building Code Advisory Committee, requesting their review.

The B.C. Building Code is based on the National Building Code and contains revisions specific to the Province of B.C. The current adoption and code change process is a formal public process which takes place every 5 years. The five (5) year interval between code editions and the process for considering code revisions are currently under review. The purpose of the review is to determine within a quickly changing climate of complex code issues, what is the most appropriate interval between codes and what process may be established to effectively deal with necessary interim revisions.

The latest code change process was concluded in the fall of 1991, therefore there is no longer an opportunity to introduce a new revision. Staff have reviewed the applicable sections of the code and confirm that the wording is ambiguous and may be interpreted such that landings are not required. Explanatory material from the Building Standards Branch and the Ontario Building Code (see Attachments A and B), which contains the same wording do however clarify that landings are required:

1. At the top of any stair where the door swings over the stair.
2. At the bottom of all stairs.

Landings are intended to provide occupants with level, secure footing at the bottom of all stairs and at the top where a door swings towards the stair. It is to be noted that a landing is currently not required where a door at the top of any stair swings away from the stair. Subsequent staff discussion with Mrs. McBurnie clarified her request. It is to obtain confirmation of the above interpretation and also for revision to require a landing at the top of a stair where the door swings away from the stair.

While the process is relatively simple where clarification of the meaning of a specific code article is requested, it is a time consuming, formal public process where an actual revision is requested. The purpose of the formal process for revisions is to provide sufficient time for those involved to review the change and possible consequences of same as well as providing for public input and the voting process. It is our understanding that further revisions to the proposed new Building Code are not being considered by the Building Standards Branch. Any proposed revisions would be considered for the next edition. Staff of the Building Department would be involved in this process in an advisory and possible voting capacity.

CONCLUSIONS:

The concern expressed is a request for clarification of current code requirements due to ambiguity of wording and also to change the code to require a landing at the top of stairs where the door swings away from the stair. Explanatory documentation appears to support the need for a landing at locations described above. However, further documentation by Mrs. McBurnie or others on her behalf would be helpful to support the request for a code change to require an additional landing.




it is understood that Mrs. McBurnie has forwarded her concerns to the appropriate Provincial Ministries including the Building Standards Branch. The Building Inspectors Association has also forwarded a letter to the Building Standards Branch requesting clarification of the present wording of the code. While the code change process has recently been concluded, the Branch has the opportunity to clarify the wording of the code through including additional commentary in the appendix of the proposed new code, and also through publishing a Branch Interpretation contained in a bulletin. Although neither the commentary nor the bulletin is legally binding, they are commonly used by those involved in construction and enforcement for guidance where ambiguities exist.

A formal application to the Provincial Appeal Board is required to obtain a legally binding ruling on the interpretation of the applicable code articles. As Chairman of the Appeal Board, the Chief Building Inspector has offered to assist Mrs. McBurnie in preparing an appeal submission.

The Building Safety Advisory Committee has been established as a Liaison Committee with the Provincial Government on matters pertaining to health and safety. Professional Associations, Building Officials, and Industry Associations are represented on this Committee. The Chief Building Inspector is also a member of this Committee and is prepared to present this issue at a regular meeting in request for their written support to the Building Standards Branch for clarification and the additional requirement for a landing at the top of stairs regardless which way the door swings.

GRH: lb
enc.

cc: Chief Building Inspector


A.L. Parr, DIRECTOR
PLANNING AND BUILDING

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| ITEM | 9 |
| MANAGER'S REPORT NO. | 20 |
| COUNCIL MEETING | 92/03/23 |

ATTACHMENT A - ARTICLES 9.8.4.2. and 9.8.4.3.-
 APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF THE B.C. AND NATIONAL BUILDING CODES

12.3.-3. Doors at Landings

9.8.4.2. Where a door swings towards a stair, the full arc of its swing shall be over a landing. Except as provided in Article 9.8.4.3., a landing shall be provided at the top and bottom of each flight of interior stairs and where a doorway occurs in a stairway.

9.8.4.3. Where a door occurs at the top of the stair in a dwelling unit, no landing is required between the doorway and the stairs.

(a) If there is a door at the top of an interior stairway, swinging away from the stairs, a landing is not mandatory. If the door swings towards the stairs a landing must be provided; a door swinging directly over stairs is dangerous.

A landing must be provided in all cases at the bottom of the stairs, and also if an intermediate door is located in a stairway, regardless of the door swing direction.

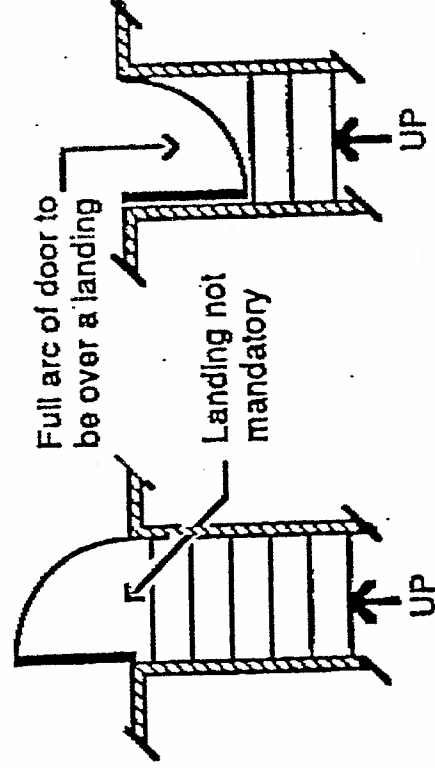
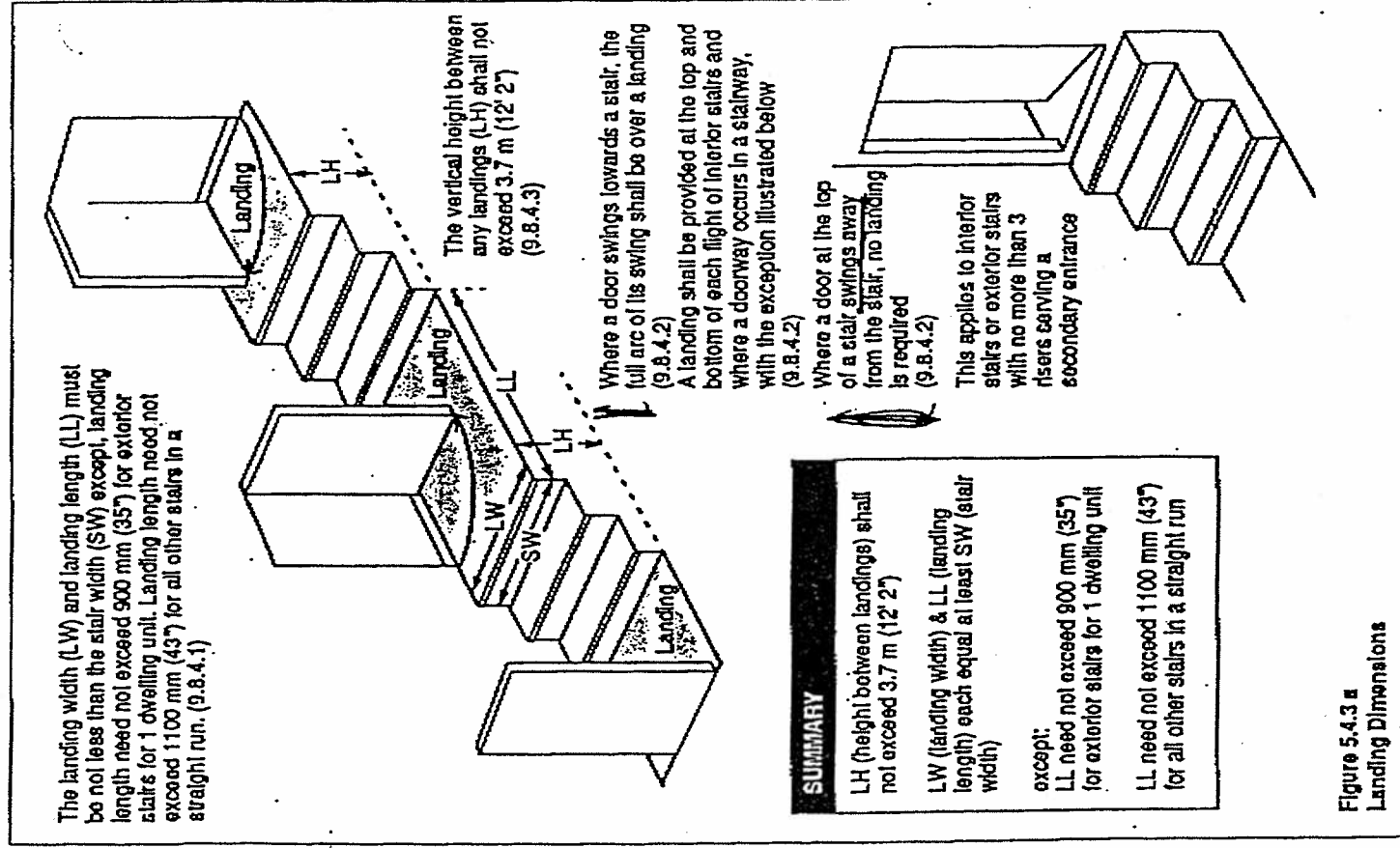


FIGURE 12-G — Doors in stairways

ATTACHMENT B - EXPLANATORY GUIDE FOR ARTICLES 9.8.4.2. and 9.8.4.3.



5.4.3 Landings

Landings are intended to provide occupants with level, secure footing at the top and bottom of stairs and at doorways which swing toward stairs. Where a door at the top of a stair swings away from the stair, no landing is required between the doorway and stair, however, provision of a landing is recognized as better building practice. A landing must be provided at the top of all exterior stairs, except where stairs containing no more than 3 risers serve a secondary entrance.

The dimensions of landings must be at least as wide and as long as the width of the stairs in which they occur, except that the length of a landing for exterior stairs need not exceed 900 mm (3'0"), and the length of a landing for all other stairs in a straight run need not exceed 1.1 m (3'6"). The maximum vertical height between landings permitted is 3.7 m (12'-2") in order to minimize the length of accidental fall and provide occupants with a resting level. The clear height over landings must not be less 1.95 m (6'6"). Figure 5.4.3 (a) illustrates requirements for landings.

Figure 5.4.3 ■ Landing Dimensions

