

Building Advisory B23-011  
May 20, 2025

## Subject: Ventilation Requirements for Smoking Areas in Buildings

### Background:

The referenced standard in the National Building Code - 2023 Alberta Edition (NBC [AE]) relating to indoor air quality is ANSI/ASHRAE 62.1-2016 Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality. The publisher of this document, ASHRAE, published a position document on Environmental Tobacco Smoke that states there is no acceptable level of exposure to the products and chemicals generated by smoking. In line with this position, they have removed all references to smoking from their standards.

While Alberta legislation largely prohibits smoking in buildings through the **Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Act**, there are several exemptions in the associated regulation. This results in the possibility of building permit applications that include areas where smoking in various forms may occur. While these occasions are limited, the lack of suitable standards can create delay and inconsistency in the review of these applications.

There is a noticeable increase in applications for the use of water pipes (more commonly known as shisha or hookah) indoors. While it is not permitted in Alberta to use tobacco with these pipes, the use of charcoal to fuel these pipes gives rise to similar exposure to products of combustion when used indoors and therefore are considered within the scope of this advisory.

### Advisory:

Ventilation Requirements for a space are defined in NBC (AE) Part 6 as follows:

#### **Division B 6.3.1.1. Required Ventilation**

*1) Except as provided in Sentence (4), all buildings shall be ventilated in accordance with this Section.*

*2) Except in storage garages covered by Article 6.3.1.3., outdoor air shall be supplied to buildings for ventilation purposes in accordance with one of the following Sections of ANSI/ASHRAE 62.1, "Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality," as a minimum:*

- a) Section 6.2, Ventilation Rate Procedure, excluding the exception stated in Section 6.2.7.1.2 and note H of Table 6.2.2.1,*
- b) Section 6.3, Indoor Air Quality Procedure, or*
- c) Section 6.4, Natural Ventilation Procedure, excluding residential occupancies.*

*3) Except in storage garages covered by Article 6.3.1.3., exhaust ventilation shall be provided in accordance with Section 6.5, Exhaust Ventilation, of ANSI/ASHRAE 62.1, "Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality," as a minimum.*

*4) Self-contained heating-season mechanical ventilation systems serving only one dwelling unit shall comply with Subsection 9.32.3.*

The referenced version of ANSI/ASHRAE 62.1 in the current NBC (AE) does not provide sufficient information to design, or evaluate the design, of a smoking room. This makes it difficult to process building permits.



It is proposed that the following criteria be accepted by The City of Calgary.

1. This advisory applies to any room permitted to be a smoking room. For the purposes of this advisory smoking includes traditional tobacco products, and smoking devices including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars and pipes. It also applies to vapes and water pipes.
2. The ventilation design for all spaces noted above must be in accordance with ASHRAE 62 2001. All other ventilation requirements must be in accordance with the currently in force versions of the relevant standards.

This interpretation was accepted by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC – May 20, 2025).

Chief Building Official  
The City of Calgary

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