

Building Advisory B23-013 / Fire Marshal Bulletin 2026-002  
September 17, 2026

Subject: Fire Department Access to Part 9 Buildings Which do not Face a Street

### Background:

The City of Calgary has seen a significant increase in Part 9 buildings being built behind other buildings. These buildings often do not face a street, private roadway or yard. Consequently, there is a risk of potential delays and reduced effectiveness of fire emergency response operations, which could lead to the spread of fire to other parts of the building and adjacent buildings.

In Part 9 of the National Building Code - Alberta Edition (NBC [AE]), Fire Department Access to Buildings is covered under Article 9.10.20.3. which contains the requirements for the design and location of fire department access to a building, to facilitate the rescue of occupants who are unable to escape and to limit fire damage to the building.

As noted in the Illustrated User's Guide – NBC 2020: Part 9 of Division B, Housing and Small Buildings, the requirements for such access in NBC Part 9 are written in very general terms and those in NBC Part 3 are very specific and should be consulted if more clarification is required.

It is additionally noted in the Illustrated User's Guide that: *"Firefighters and their vehicles must have unobstructed access to every building so that firefighting can proceed without delay when they arrive. Every building, therefore, is required to be accessible to fire department vehicles in all seasons."*

*A clear path of travel for the firefighters between the fire truck and the building should be provided so that the distance required to carry hose lines and ladders is relatively short. In a building divided so that there is no access inside the building from one segment to another (e.g., a strip shopping plaza or row housing), the access route should be located so that the path of travel to each entrance is reasonably short.*

*In addition to other considerations taken into account in the planning of fire department access routes, special variations could be permitted for a house or residential building that is protected with an automatic sprinkler system. The sprinkler system must be designed in accordance with the appropriate NFPA standard, and adequate water supply pressure and quantity must be ensured. These considerations could apply to buildings that are located on the sides of hills and that are not conveniently accessible by roads designed for firefighting equipment. They could also apply to infill housing units that are located behind other buildings on a given property."*

This advisory has been developed and is issued in partnership with Development, Business and Building Services (DBBS) and Calgary Fire Department (CFD) to provide guidance for the design of acceptable emergency access routes for Part 9 buildings in Calgary which do not face a street, private roadway or yard.

### Advisory:

This advisory applies to all Part 9 buildings which do not face a street, private roadway or yard except for detached garages, carports, accessory residential buildings, storage lockers and detached buildings being used for home-based businesses.

Reference should also be made to [RB14-042 Firefighting Access for Part 9 Buildings](#) which is applicable to fire department access Part 9 buildings which do face a street.

## 1. Fire Department Vehicle Street Requirements

- a) If an access route is proposed for fire department vehicles by anything other than a city street (e.g. a lane, alley, private roadway or yard etc.), evidence must be provided showing the vehicle access route meets the design requirements of Article 3.2.5.6. Access Route Design.
- b) The vehicle access route referred to in Sentence 1. (a) must be paved and evidence provided confirming that the surface of the vehicle access route can support a load of 38,556 kg (85,000 lbs) for a fire department vehicle and a point load of 517 kPa (75 psi) over a 600mm x 600mm (24" x 24") area for the outrigger pad size.

Consistent with the NBC (AE) appendix note A-3.2.5.6.(1), vehicle access route loading requirements have been established in consultation with the Calgary Fire Department.

- c) If evidence can be provided by the applicant which shows the requirements of Sentences 1.(a) and (b) are satisfied, an access route other than a city street will be considered acceptable.

## 2. Building Access Requirements for Firefighters

- a) For a single dwelling unit or house with a secondary suite, no more than 2 storeys in height, not facing a street, private roadway or yard, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, a firefighter path of travel should be provided to the dwelling units meeting the requirements of **Length of Firefighter Path of Travel – Street to Building** as noted in Sentence 3.(a).
- b) For two dwelling units with or without secondary suites, no more than 2 storeys in height, not facing a street, private roadway or yard, as illustrated in Figures 1.2 or 1.3, a firefighter path of travel should be provided to the dwelling units meeting the requirements of **Length of Firefighter Path of Travel - Street to Building and Hydrant to Fire Department Vehicle** as noted in Sentence 3. (a) and (b).
- c) If the access route length exceeds the limits required by Sentences 2.(a). or (b)., and for laneless parcels, site configurations, developments and building types other than those illustrated in Figure 1, an automatic sprinkler system meeting the requirements of Article 3.2.5.12. of the NBC (AE) shall be installed in the building.
- d) For all buildings which do not face a street, private roadway or yard, a firefighter path of travel shall be provided to the buildings meeting the **Width and Height of Firefighter Path of Travel** requirement noted in Sentence 3.(c).

## 3. Firefighter Path of Travel Requirements

- a) Length of Firefighter Path of Travel – Street to Building (see Figure 2)
  - i) the unobstructed path of travel from the street, private roadway or yard to one entrance of the building should be not more than 45 m,
  - ii) if a portion of a building is cut off from the remainder of the building and has no internal access (i.e. attached dwelling units or rowhouses), the unobstructed path of travel to one entrance of each portion of the building should be not more than 45 m, and
- b) Length of Firefighter Path of Travel – Hydrant to Fire Department Vehicle (see Figure 2)
  - i) the unobstructed path of travel from a hydrant to the fire department vehicle should be not more than 45 m, or

- ii) the unobstructed path of travel from a hydrant to the fire department vehicle should not be more than 75 m if evidence is provided by the applicant confirming that the hydrant can deliver the required fire flows to fight a fire in that specific building.

For this to apply, the application must include a water flow test for the hydrant(s), conducted no more than 12 months prior, and calculations based on the Fire Underwriters Survey confirming that the required volume of water, in litres per minute, is available to fight a fire based on the building's calculated fire load. The application must be in the form of an [Alternative Solution](#), submitted by a registered professional engineer and conform with the requirements of Article 2.3.1.1. of the NBC (AE).

c) Width and Height of Firefighter Path of Travel (see Figure 3 and 4)

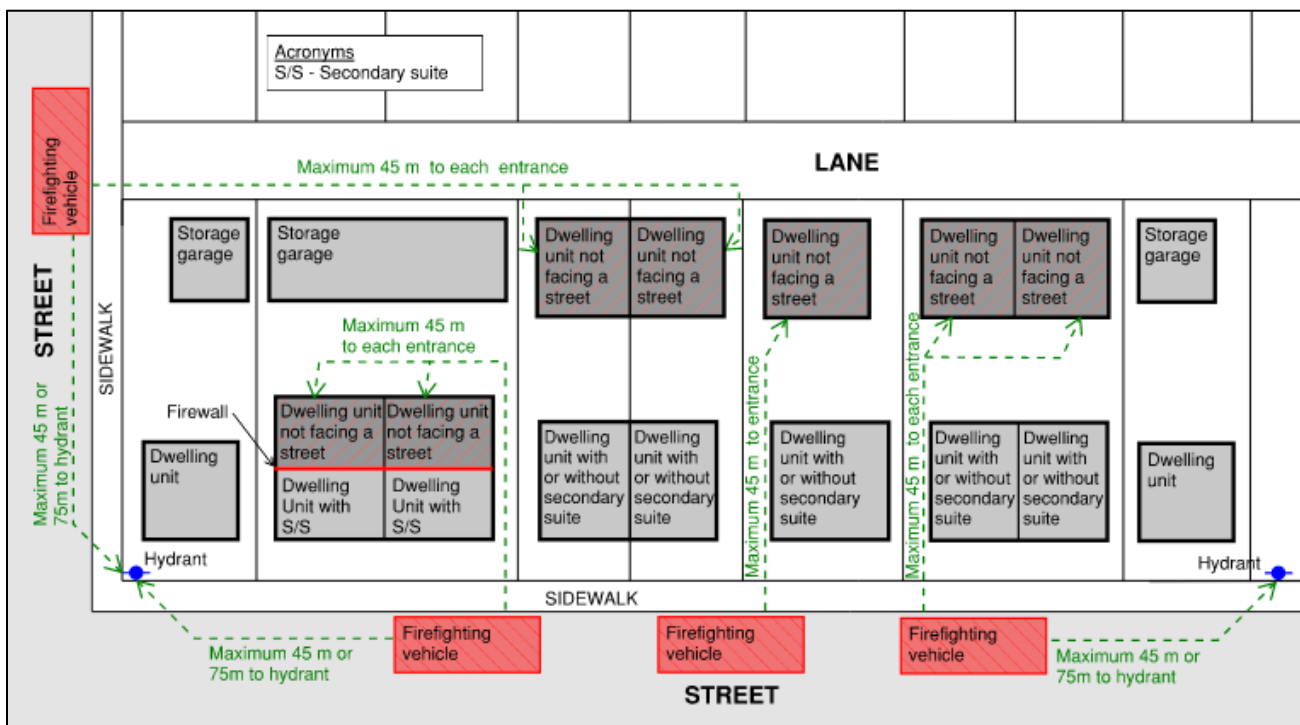
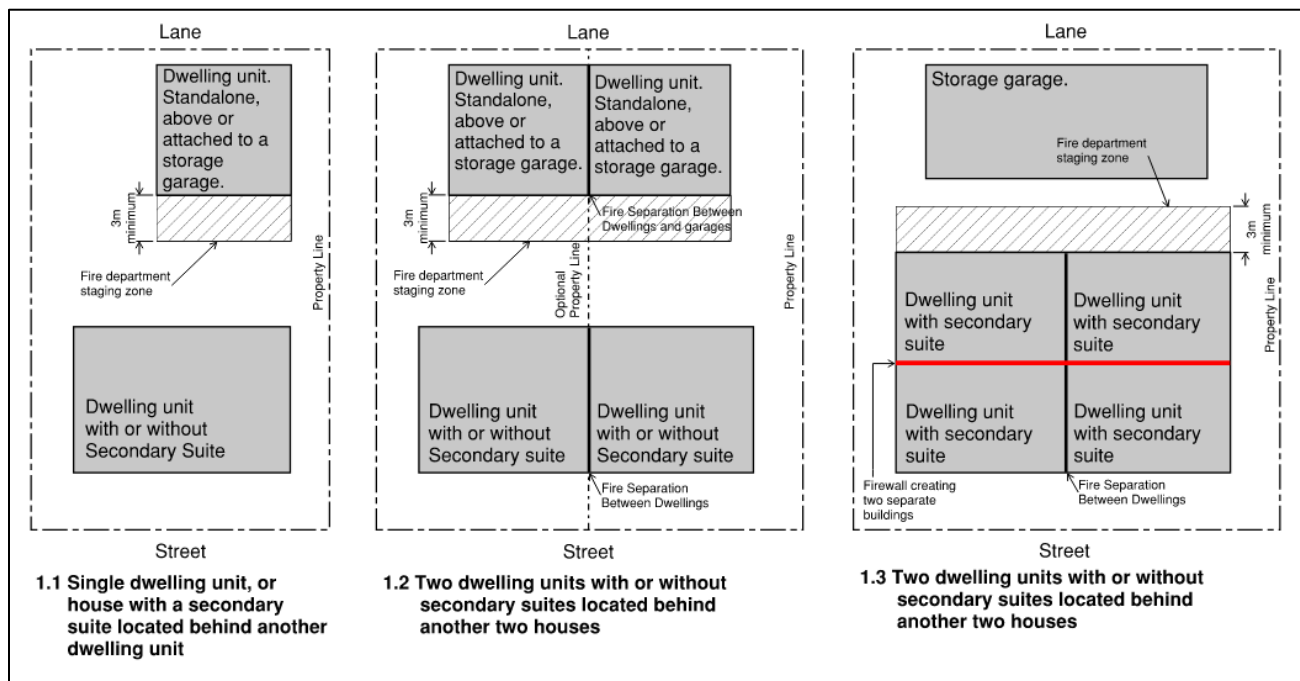
- i) a path of travel shall be provided to all building entrances from the fire department vehicle which is a minimum of 1 m wide by 2.1 m high.
- ii) water, electric, gas meters and other small, localized projections are permitted to reduce the path of travel width,
- iii) other projections into the path of travel are not permitted. Examples of other projections include, but are not limited to, air conditioning units, fireplace vents, cantilevers, window wells, sheds, fences, and decks, and
- iv) a 3-metre-wide staging zone for fire department operations shall be provided to the face of the building which has windows or access panels as required by Article 9.10.20.1. of the NBC (AE) or if windows or access panels are not required by Article 9.10.20.1. to a face of the building having at least one window or balcony on each storey above the main floor level.

#### 4. Exterior Strobe Light

- a) An exterior strobe light must be provided to all buildings which do not face a street, private roadway or yard.
- b) The strobe light shall be located at a minimum height of 1.8 m above the adjacent ground level, adjacent to each dwelling or cut off building entrance. The strobe light must be visible from the fire department access route and clear of obstructions such as trees and fences.
- c) The strobe light must be rated for exterior use and be activated by interconnection to the smoke alarms located within the dwelling unit or building.

#### 5. Applicable Sprinkler Standard to Different Building Types

- a) NFPA 13D applies to one-and two-family dwellings with no dwelling unit located above a storage garage which provides parking for another dwelling unit.
- b) NFPA 13R applies to only a building of residential occupancy throughout, which is not more than 4 storeys in building height.
- c) NFPA 13 applies to all other buildings types which NFPA 13R and 13D do not apply to.



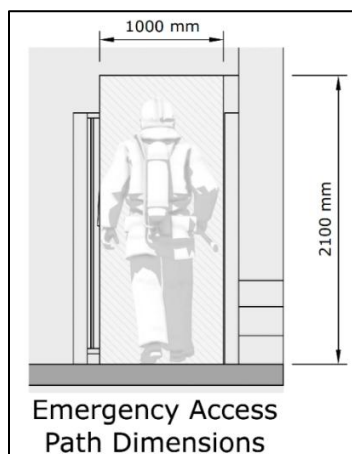


Figure 3.

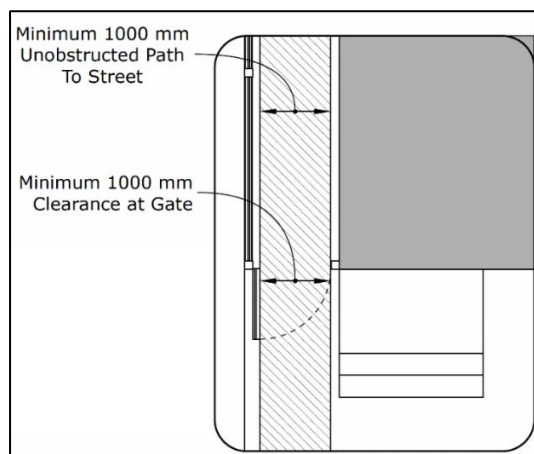


Figure 4.

This interpretation was accepted by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC – September 17, 2026).

Codes & Standards Technical Interpretation Committee  
Development, Business and Building Services and Calgary Fire Department  
The City of Calgary

This Advisory is issued by The City of Calgary. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.