

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE
AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, POABC

File No: 98-0117

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date:

November 17, 2004

Building Code Edition:

BC Building Code 1998

Subject:

grade - localized depressions, basement / first storey, allowance for sunken balconies

Keywords:

grade, basement / first storey, localized depressions

Building Code Reference(s):

1.1.3.2., Defined terms: 'grade', 'basement', 'first storey', 'building height'

Question:

Is it the intent that 'localized depressions' as described in the definition of 'grade' used to establish building height can include sunken balconies comprising 50% of one side of a building?

Interpretation:

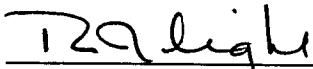
No.

In the Building Code, definition of 'grade' allowance is only indicated for localized depressions such as for vehicle or pedestrian entrances. In other words, these entrance features need not be considered in the determination of grade adjoining the exterior wall of a building. This means that other features such as sunken balconies must be considered in establishing the adjoining 'grade' level.

The allowance for vehicle and pedestrian entrances to be discounted in determining grade is in recognition of the functional need for vehicle and direct firefighter access into basements. Excessive manipulation of grade to allow more than such depressed features could affect or compromise firefighter access and laddering operations to the storeys above the basement.

It is acknowledged that there are complex projects where judgement has to be made in interpreting the nature and degree of localized depressions and the acceptability of proposed vehicle and pedestrian entrances. This should be done in consultation with the local Fire Department and Authority Having Jurisdiction.

Reference can be made to BC Code Appeal # 930, which considered a similar question.



R. J. Light, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee of AIBC, APEGBC, BOABC, and POABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the local *Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.