

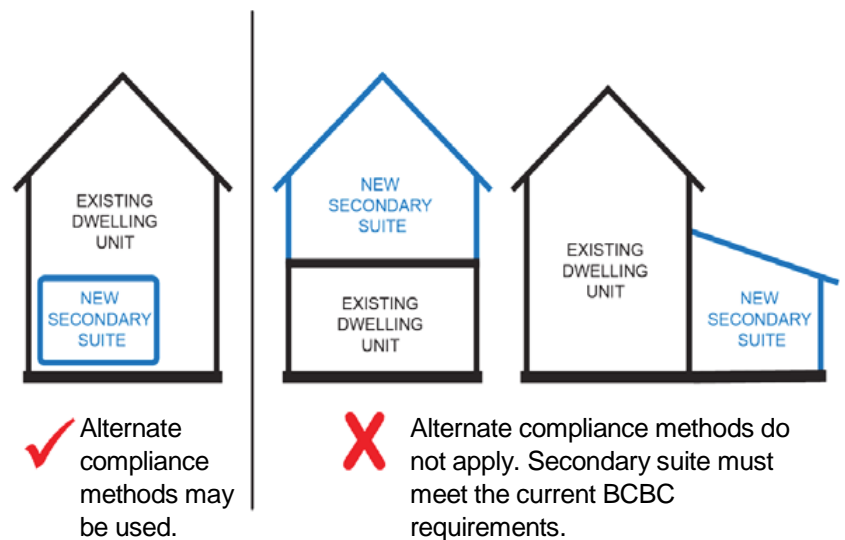
The following pages summarize some basic requirements of the **BC Building Code** for secondary suites. *In order for your secondary suite to be legal, the Saanich zoning/legal requirements will also need to be met.* Please visit our website for more information: [saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/development-applications/secondary-suites.html](http://saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/development-applications/secondary-suites.html)

## Adding a Secondary Suite to Existing Buildings

In order to remove barriers to the construction of secondary suites, the BC Building Code (BCBC) has recently been amended to allow special provisions for secondary suites constructed in existing buildings.

These modified requirements do not apply to buildings of new construction, or additions to existing buildings, where there is no hardship in complying with the current requirements for design and construction.

The graphic on the right illustrates when these modified requirements (or “alternate compliance methods”) apply to secondary suites.



## Ceiling Heights

### Current BCBC Requirements (Suites in New Buildings or Additions):

Minimum ceiling height for living space:	2.1 m (6'-10")
Minimum clear height over stairs:	1.95 m (6'-5")

### Alternate Compliance Method (Suites in Existing Buildings):

Minimum ceiling height in suite:	1.95 m (6'-5")
Minimum clear height under beams and ducting (including where located over stairs):*	1.85 m (6'-1")

\*Note: This relaxed height requirement only applies to *existing* beams and ducting.

## Fire Separation

The secondary suite must be separated from the rest of the house by a fire separation with a certain minimum fire-resistance rating (see table below), providing a continuous barrier against the spread of fire and smoke. This required rating applies to all vertical (i.e. walls) and horizontal (i.e. floors/ceilings) assemblies dividing the suite from the primary residence or dividing shared spaces from the two dwelling units.

Any doors or windows located in a fire separation must have the appropriate fire-protection rating.

Generally, a minimum 45-minute fire-resistance rating is required for the secondary suite fire separation. This can be reduced by providing additional fire safety measures:

Fire Safety Measure	Required Fire Rating Between Suites
None	45 minutes
Install one additional photo-electric smoke alarm in the secondary suite and one in the primary residence. These alarms must be interconnected with each other and are <i>in addition</i> to any other required smoke alarms.	30 minutes
Ensure all smoke alarms within the house are photo-electric and interconnected with each other so the activation of one alarm will cause all other alarms in the building to sound (in both the secondary suite and the primary residence).	15 minutes
Install fire sprinklers throughout the building.	None

### How to achieve the required fire-resistance rating:

Please refer to BCBC Table 9.10.3.1.-A and 9.10.3.1.-B for fire-resistance ratings of various wall and floor assemblies. The BC Building Code can be accessed online, free of charge, at [bcpublications.ca](http://bcpublications.ca).

## Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are required in houses with an attached garage or that contain a fuel-burning appliance such as a fireplace. They must be located a) inside each bedroom, or b) outside each bedroom, within 5 m of each bedroom door, measured following corridors and doorways.

If CO alarms are required in a house with a secondary suite, they must be interconnected so the activation of one alarm will cause all other alarms in the building to sound (in both the secondary suite and the primary residence).

## Sound Transmission

Controlling sound transmission between the secondary suite and the other dwelling unit in a house is important for the health and well-being of the occupants. The separation between the two units must have an STC (Sound Transmission Class) rating of not less than 43, or an ASTC (Apparent Sound Transmission Class) rating of not less than 40.

Alternatively, the BC Building Code allows you to use one of the following two prescriptive construction assemblies to meet the sound transmission requirements:

### Suites in New Buildings or Additions:

- joist and stud spaces filled with sound-absorbing material
- resilient channel on one side of the separation
- gypsum board on ceilings and on both sides of walls (must be appropriate type and thickness to meet the required fire-resistance rating)

### Suites in Existing Buildings:

- add to one side of an existing finished assembly:
- resilient metal channel spaced 400 or 600 mm o.c.
- an additional layer of gypsum board (must be appropriate type and thickness to meet the required fire-resistance rating)

## Ventilation

The control of smoke transfer between dwelling units, or between the dwelling units and other spaces in the house, is a critical safety issue. *The ideal solution is to provide a second, separate ventilation system to serve the secondary suite.*

Any alternatives to this must address the issue of smoke control. If a heating and ventilation system serves more than one dwelling unit, the system must be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a duct-type smoke detector. Ducts that penetrate fire separations, and have openings on both sides of the separation, must be equipped with fire dampers.

## Plumbing & Electrical

A shut-off valve shall be installed where the water supply enters *each dwelling unit*, so that, when the water supply to one suite is shut off, the water supply to the remainder of the building is not interrupted.

It is not mandatory that the secondary suite has its own hot water tank – it can be shared between the suite and the rest of the house.

For electrical requirements, please contact Technical Safety BC.