



HEADS UP

The Building Code regulates a minimum 1.95m (6' 5") floor-to-ceiling height for secondary suite. Especially in basements, ductwork, beams and drop floors can reduce ceiling heights to less than code minimum. Portions of a room's ceiling height are permitted to be less than 1.95m, provided the ceiling height is maintained over a minimum floor area as indicated in the table below and is continuous through the entry point of a room or space. If the floor area of a room is less than what is indicated in the table, the entire room needs to meet the minimum ceiling height requirements. Exit doors are required to be a minimum 1.98m (6' 8") in height. However, interior doors within a secondary suite may be reduced to 1.95m where a lower ceiling height does not allow for a full-height door.

Living room	10m ² (108ft ²)
Dining room	5.2m ² (56ft ²)
Kitchen	3.2m ² (35ft ²)
Master bedroom	4.9m ² (53ft ²)
Secondary bedroom	3.5m ² (38ft ²)
Laundry, utility or unfinished	Continuous along the path of travel
bathroom	2.2m ² (8ft ²)
Hallway or entry stair	Entire floor area

Table 1: Minimum floor area over which a ceiling height of 1.95m is required.

FIRE PROTECTION

A means of protection against the spread of smoke and fire from one dwelling unit to another is essential. Also, any common space or rooms containing heating equipment must be protected from the remainder of the building. This is achieved by providing a layer of a typical 1/2" drywall on the ceiling and on both sides of wall studs which is separate different spaces.

All drywall joints must be taped and filled with a drywall compound. Any services such as pipes or ductwork which pass through a protective separation need to be tightly fitted and sealed with a means of protection against the spread of smoke and fire from one dwelling unit to the other is essential. Also, any common space or rooms containing heating equipment must be protected from the remainder of the building. This is achieved by providing a layer of a typical 1/2" drywall on the ceiling and on both sides of wall studs which separate different spaces. All drywall joints must be taped and filled with a drywall compound.

Smoke alarms need to be installed at or near the ceiling of every floor of each dwelling unit and are required within 5m (16' 5") of each bedroom entry and in a common utility room. Smoke alarms must be interconnected so the activation of one alarm causes all alarms in both dwelling units to sound.

Carbon monoxide alarms are required within 5m (16' 5") of each bedroom entry whenever a residential building has an attached garage or contains a fuel-burning appliance. A carbon monoxide alarm also needs to be installed within a common utility room which contains a fuel-burning appliance. A carbon monoxide alarm shall be mechanically fixed at a height specified by its manufacturer and may be battery operated or permanently wired.

PLUMBING

Every suite of residential occupancy shall have a supply of hot water and at least one kitchen sink, a bathtub or shower, a lavatory (bathroom sink) and a water closet (toilet). Space for laundry facilities shall be provided in each dwelling unit or in a common location conveniently accessible to the occupants of each unit. The sanitary line leaving the house requires back-flow prevention at branch drain of each unit.

HEATING & VENTILATION

Each dwelling unit shall have an independent heating and ventilation system each with independent furnaces and ductwork. There are several other heating systems to accomplish this other than forced air, such as electric baseboard or hydronic radiant heating. Where a non-ducted heating system is used, an independent ventilation system is also required. Where hydronic heating is used for both units, a single boiler may be used, provided there is separate zone control for each unit. A heating system which serves more than one dwelling unit shall be designed and installed under the supervision of a registered engineer. Heating equipment requires provisions for access for inspection, maintenance and cleaning.

ELECTRICAL

A common electrical panel is permitted to serve both units, provided there are no shared branch circuits between suites and the suites are not individually metered. Electrical panels must be located where they are not subject to mechanical damage and are readily accessible to both units.



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These pamphlets have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations in effect. Users are advised to contact the Planning and Development Department for assistance as the Town of High River accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.

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SECONDARY SUITES

ALBERTA BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS



Planning &
Development



