



When is an Elevator Required?

Significant changes have been made in the 2020 edition of the National Building Code of Canada, which now prescribes conditions where a designer must provide an elevator. Previous Codes did not require an elevator, leaving it voluntary.

There are more conditions and exemptions than listed in this advisory. This advisory is intended to summarize most but not all cases due to the complexity of the full code and should not be used as a replacement for a full code review and analysis by a competent designer.

First, determine if a building must be barrier-free

Barrier Free Requirements and the requirement for an elevator, are exempt from building types listed in Article 3.8.2.1, which include:

- Detached houses, semi-detached houses, houses with a secondary suite, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, row houses and boarding houses (see Note A-1.4.1.2.(1) of Division A, Secondary Suite)
- Buildings of Group F, Division 1 major occupancy, and
- Buildings that are not intended to be occupied on a daily or full-time basis, including automatic telephone exchanges, pumphouses and substations.

If barrier free requirements are not exempt above, is an elevator still required?

Use or Room Type Exemptions

An elevator is not required to a floor level, if the elevated floor only contains any number of the following uses noted in Sentence 3.8.2.3(2):

- Service rooms
- Elevator machine rooms
- Janitors' rooms
- Service spaces
- Crawl spaces
- Attic or roof space

Part 9 Apartment Building Exemptions (Article 9.5.2.3)

An elevator is optional in Part 9 apartments. Articles 9.5.2.1 and 9.5.2.3 could be interpreted that an elevator may still be required if criteria in Section 3.8 require it. However, the Government of Saskatchewan received a written interpretation from National Research Council (NRC), noting that the exemption in Article 9.5.2.3 overrides the requirements in Section 3.8 for Part 9 apartment buildings. Suites may still be required to be barrier-free.

Small Building Exemptions (Sentence 3.8.2.3.(2))

If a building is not more than 2 storeys in building height, then elevators might not be required. However, if this building contains storeys with any of the following attributes, then barrier-free access shall be provided to those floor levels (which is often done through the use of elevators):

- If the floor level is 600 m² or more in *floor area*, then barrier-free access must be provided to that floor,
- If the floor level contains facilities that are not available on the entrance level AND are integral to the principal function of the entrance level, then barrier-free access must be provided to that floor, or
- If the floor level contains an *assembly occupancy* more than 100 m², in *floor area*, then barrier-free access must be provided to that floor.

Residential Suite Exemptions

An elevator is not required within floor levels of a residential suite which are not at the same level as the entry level to the suite.

Does a residential building require barrier free suites?

The Building Code Regulations of Saskatchewan require 5% of rental units to be accessible but exemptions apply when the building is not required to be accessible.

- Detached houses, duplexes, triplex, town houses and others would not need an elevator or 5% of the residential suites to be barrier free because the build types are exempt from Article 3.8.2.1.
- Buildings under 600m² and also under 3 storeys in building height, would not require an elevator. Furthermore, barrier free residential suites would not be required if an elevator is not voluntary installed and the floor level of each suite and the entrance storey exceeds a difference in height of at least 600mm (Exemption from Sentence 9.5.2.3.(2))

Residential Examples

Triplex

- Barrier free exempt by Article 3.8.2.1
- Elevator not required by Sentence 3.8.2.3.(2)
 - Less than 600m²
 - Less than 3 storeys
 - Not Assembly occupancy over 100m²
 - Upper or lower floors do not have integral use to the building not provided on the main floor

6 Unit Apartment (2 units in each of basement, main and second storey), but under Part 9 of the NBC

- Elevator not required by Sentence 3.8.2.3.(2)
 - Less than 600m²
 - Less than 3 storeys in building height
 - Not Assembly occupancy over 100m²
 - Upper or lower floors do not have integral use to the building not provided on the main floor
 - In general, the entrance level of an apartment building is expected to meet barrier-free requirements (which would also include Saskatchewan's amendments in *The Building Code Regulations* for requiring a certain number of barrier-free suites in a rental apartment building).

- However, if the elevation difference from the entrance and every dwelling unit is more than 600 mm, then barrier-free access even to the building entrance is waived (see Article 9.5.2.3. Note that this would also mean that this building is no longer subject to Saskatchewan's amendments in *The Building Code Regulations* for requiring a certain number of barrier-free suites in a rental apartment building, as the building is not required to be barrier-free at all by Code).
- If an elevator is voluntarily provided in the building, then barrier-free access shall be provided to all storeys, and barrier-free suites shall be provided as required by *The Building Code Regulations*.

4 Unit Apartment (1 unit in each of basement, main, second and third storey) built under Part 9 of the NBC.

- Although not explicitly exempt in Section 3.8 (more than 3 units, more than 2 storeys), an elevator is not required by Article 9.5.2.3.
- In general, the entrance level of an apartment building is expected to meet barrier-free requirements (which would also include Saskatchewan's amendments in *The Building Code Regulations* for requiring a certain number of barrier-free suites in a rental apartment building).
 - However, if the elevation difference from the entrance and every dwelling unit is more than 600 mm, then barrier-free access even to the building entrance is waived (see Article 9.5.2.3. Note that this would also mean that this building is no longer subject to Saskatchewan's amendments in *The Building Code Regulations* for requiring a certain number of barrier-free suites in a rental apartment building, as the building is not required to be barrier-free at all by Code).
- If an elevator is voluntarily provided in the building, then barrier-free access shall be provided to all storeys, and barrier-free suites shall be provided as required by *The Building Code Regulations*.

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