



BULLETIN 31: BUILDINGS REQUIRING THE SERVICES OF AN ARCHITECT

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(This second edition replaces and renders obsolete its predecessor edition, dated April 2002. While the core content is fundamentally the same, there is updated reference to the current building codes; occasional improvement to syntax and form; enhanced definitions and explanatory language; engineering profession information; and clarity respecting mixed use and, especially, Group C residential occupancy. Substantive updates are flagged by vertical sidebar.)

The following Table and Notes (1 through 8) represent a consolidated summary taken from the *Architects Act* (the “*Act*”). It is intended as a convenient guide and does not take the place of the *Act* itself, which prevails in all cases. Persons who are not architects are prohibited from promoting or providing architectural services (see note 2) on the referenced building types.

Major Occupancy per the current building codes	Use	Types of Building or Parts of Building requiring the services of an architect under section 60 of the <i>Architects Act</i> . (see also Notes 1 through 8)
Group A (Part 3)	Public Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any one-storey building with an unsupported span exceeding 9 m or gross area exceeding 275 m²; – any building of more than one storey with gross area exceeding 235 m²; and – all schools, any size
Group B (Part 3)	Hospital, Sanatorium, or Home for the Aged Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any building (excluding veterinary hospital) with a capacity exceeding 12 beds – any building with gross area exceeding 470 m²
Group C	Residential Hotel or similar occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any building containing 5 or more dwelling units – any building containing 11 or more guest rooms
Group D & E	Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any building with gross area exceeding 470 m²
Group F (F1: Part 3)	Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any building with gross area exceeding 470 m²

In addition to the requirements of the Act, all projects must also satisfy the current BC Building Code or the Vancouver Building Bylaw (collectively referred to herein as the building codes). Under these building codes, architects are required to be engaged for design and field review and to provide corresponding assurances on all Part 3 buildings (of any occupancy or size) and any Part 9 buildings with common egress systems and firewalls. It is important to understand that the Part 3/Part 9 distinction is immaterial under the Act.

NOTES (arising from the *Architects Act* and to be read in conjunction with preceding table):

1. An architect, under the *Act*, must be registered with the Architectural Institute of British Columbia.
2. An architect's services include the preparation of designs, plans, supporting documents and the provision of field services for the erection, addition or alteration to or repair of buildings for persons other than him/herself.
3. An alteration, addition or renovation of an existing building which causes the ensuing gross area to exceed the limits in the preceding table shall require an architect's services even if the alteration, addition or renovation itself does not exceed the limits.
4. A professional engineer may practise professional engineering as permitted under the *Engineers and Geoscientists Act* of British Columbia; or, specifically, a chemical, civil, electrical, forest, geological, mechanical, metallurgical, mining or structural engineer may design or supervise the erection, alteration or repair of a structure usually designed or supervised for these purposes by a professional engineer.
5. A corporation acting through members of its regular staff or other qualified persons may make plans or specifications for, or supervise the erection or alteration of, the whole or part of a building to be occupied and used exclusively by the corporation, its subsidiaries or lessees, as part of an industrial plant operated by it.
6. The *Act* defines a "building" as "a structure consisting of foundations, walls or roof, with or without other parts". Under the *Act*, "building" shall be construed also to mean "parts of a building". (*The Act refers to buildings, not complexes or projects of multiple buildings.*)
7. An architect's services are also required on any building in excess of 470 m² in gross area which is either: (i) mixed-use with Groups D, E and F occupancies together or combined with other occupancies; or (ii) not included in the preceding table.
8. The *Act* defines "gross area" of a building to be "the aggregate area of all floors"; i.e., the sum of those floors below, at or above grade, measured between outside faces of exterior perimeter walls. *The building codes' measure of "building area" is not the Act's "gross area" but, rather, only the size of the building's "footprint" (between firewalls, if any), no matter how many floors are in the building. The definitions of "building" and "gross area" in the Act are not affected by the existence of firewalls, and therefore the inclusion of firewalls in a "building" cannot be used to alter the application of the Act, including the legislated requirements for retaining an architect.*

It is important to understand that architectural services for design and field review, complete with letters of assurance, are also required by the building codes in the cases of (i) all assembly and institutional buildings (Groups A and B occupancies) of any size, even those below the thresholds of the Architects Act; and (ii) all residential buildings which are over 600 m² in 'footprint' or 3 storeys, including single-family; duplexes; triplexes and quadriplexes which do not require an architect under the Act.

Additionally, the *Engineers and Geoscientists Act* of British Columbia contains statutory requirements as to the engagement of a professional engineer to provide engineering services. Persons who are not professional engineers are prohibited from providing such services. Refer also to AIBC Bulletin 33: Architecture and Engineering: Complementary Professions. Under the Memorandum of Agreement between the Architectural Institute of British Columbia and the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia, a competent professional engineer may be engaged instead of an architect for a building of major industrial occupancy where no subsidiary occupancy exceeds such limits as are described in the preceding table for Groups A, B, C, D & E (see also note 4).

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