



# GUIDELINES

## Fire Safety at B.C. Summer and Winter Games

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The following is a discussion of the needs and considerations surrounding fire safety when a community hosts the B.C. Summer or Winter Games.

Many communities throughout the province host the B.C. Summer or Winter Games. Some of these communities lack the facilities to properly accommodate the vast numbers of participants and spectators. Facilities are sometimes used that are neither designed for the activities, nor to accommodate the number of persons expected for these games.

A community must be advised of the potential number of people who will be in attendance for the event in order that they can assess their ability to host the games. It is at this point that planning for the fire safety needs of the games must begin in cooperation with the local fire authority.

### 1.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that communities who have been selected to host the B.C. Summer or Winter Games establish a Fire Safety Plan to address the changes in use of the buildings and/or facilities. This should be done in the early planning stages.

### 2.0 Areas to be Addressed

From a fire safety perspective, there are primarily two functions which require attention at the planning stage. They are assembly use and sleeping use.

### 3.0 Assembly

The concern with assembly areas is greater during the B.C. Winter Games when many activities occur indoors. The times of greatest concern however, are opening and closing ceremonies.

#### 3.1 Procedure

The local fire authority shall be made aware of buildings and /or facilities that are to be utilized for assembly events during the games.

The first review will verify that approval for use as assembly areas have been given by the authority having jurisdiction.

The second consideration is that safety systems are maintained in operational condition as per the requirements of the British Columbia Fire Code Regulation.

The third item is to ascertain the proposed activity and the number or persons who will be in attendance. If the building has been approved for assembly use, the regular fire safety maintenance is up-to-date, and the proposed occupant load does not exceed the number established at the time of approval, the fire authority can consider the building acceptable for use.

If on the other hand, the building has not been approved for assembly use, upgrading may be required. If the safety systems (ie: fire alarm systems, adequate exiting, exit and emergency lighting, etc.), are not installed or are not maintained in operational condition, installation and/or maintenance must be completed prior to being acceptable for use.

Seating plans and/or floor plans shall be developed and reviewed in cooperation with the local fire authority.

#### 3.2 Occupant Load

The occupant load, as established by the British Columbia Building and Fire Code will not be exceeded.

#### 3.3 Non-Approved Buildings

In some instances, buildings which were designed for an occupancy other than assembly use are used during the games. In cases where this occurs, it is the local fire authority who decides whether or not the non-approved buildings may be used and under what circumstances.

An example of this would be the ice surface of an arena which is approved for bleacher seating only. A problem arises when the proposed use exceeds the existing design features and does not consider the safety of occupants.

In such instances, it may be impractical to upgrade a facility for the games and approval for such use should not be given. Other locations should be sought for those events.

## **4.0 Sleeping Accommodation**

The volume of participants at B.C. Summer and Winter Games have necessitated that schools, gymnasiums and other non-residential buildings be used for sleeping accommodation.

### **4.1 Requirements**

Most facilities to be used for sleeping accommodation can meet the basic requirements for residential occupancies with the presence of safety systems, such as fire alarm and detection systems, emergency lighting, exit lighting, fire extinguishers and adequate exits.

It is the responsibility of the owner/occupier to ensure that the required systems are maintained in operational condition.

As many areas used for sleeping are open configurations, it is essential that layouts used do not restrict access to exits.

If the fire safety systems are deficient, with respect to sleeping accommodations, the local fire authority may require alternatives that are equivalent to the requirements (i.e.: 24 hour fire/security watch, smoke alarms, etc).

### **4.2 Conflict with Security Measures**

A common concern expressed is that some users of sleeping accommodations may leave sleeping areas via exit doors after "lights out."

In the past, this has resulted in exit doors being chained or otherwise locked, and exits impeded which creates an additional risk to occupants by rendering the panic hardware inoperable. This problem for the most part has been overcome with the use of safety tape, however, this should be thoroughly discussed between the security and fire safety organizers in order to avert any potential problems.

### **4.3 Classroom Equipment**

Desks and classroom equipment should be stored in classrooms not in use.

There shall be no storage in hallways, access to exits, exits, exit stair shafts, etc.

## **5.0 Fire Safety Plans**

Section 2.8 of the British Columbia Fire Code clearly spells out a requirement assigning responsibility for ensuring that buildings are used as designed, safety systems are operational and that emergency procedures are in place.

The fire safety plan shall to be done in cooperation with the local fire authority and supervisory staff.

An example of the need to address this issue would be a school used for sleeping accommodation. Under normal circumstances, the principal would normally be the "supervisor" for the fire safety plan. For use during the Games, the principal would not likely be present, therefore a separate plan is necessary. A copy of the temporary use fire safety plan shall be issued to the local fire authority.

## **6.0 Risk Management**

This is an area that enforcement authorities on all levels have become very conscious of in recent years.

The fact that an authority has been given a duty of care means that every reasonable effort is to be taken to ensure compliance with laws in effect.

Occupant loads shall be enforced during sporting events with the same effectiveness as they are in other assembly occupancies. A regular system of inspections shall be implemented by supervisory staff.

The *Fire Services Act* (the Act) and regulations establish the minimum requirements for life and fire safety in buildings. The Act states that bylaws, policy or other requirements shall not be repugnant or establish a lesser level of safety than that provided for by the Act.

## **7.0 Summary**

The preceding discussion has touched on the main areas of concern from a fire safety perspective and focuses on the need to adhere closely to regulations presently in place.

These regulations have a degree of flexibility built in; however, in the interest of risk management, the fire authority may be reluctant to grant excessive latitude in applying the requirements.

To a large degree, the success of implementing fire regulations will depend upon the inclusion of the fire service in the planning stages of these events.