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The BC Codes – Release of Next Editions

The province will be publishing the next editions of the BC Building Code, BC Fire Code, and BC Plumbing Code (“BC Codes”) in the spring of 2012 with an effective date in the fall of 2012.

The province generally adopts next editions of the BC Codes in the year following the release of the new edition of the National Building Code. However, the new National Building Code was released with over 850 changes. Some of the more substantial changes require further analysis.

The following changes, in particular, require additional analysis on the implications, as well as further consultation with industry:

- changes to strengthen lateral load (seismic/earthquake) design requirements for residential home construction;
- new requirements for secondary suites, an important issue for homeowners and local governments, particularly in densely populated areas;
- a new requirement to consider radon soil gas mitigation;
- increased energy efficiency requirements for new residential construction; and,
- new classification for assisted living facilities introduced under Part 3.

Introducing seismic design for housing, new requirements for secondary suites, considering radon soil gas, and increased energy efficiency requirements, have the potential for cost impact and change in construction practice for the housing industry in B.C.

We understand some in the industry anticipated the release of next editions of the BC Codes in spring 2011. However, moving the adoption date to 2012 allows the necessary time to complete the additional analyses to ensure public safety and address construction practice issues.

Industry and other stakeholders will have the necessary time to consider the code changes and develop education and training opportunities for their members so they may become familiar with the new building code provisions. Over the next year, the province will work collaboratively with industry to ensure a smooth implementation of the new BC Codes.