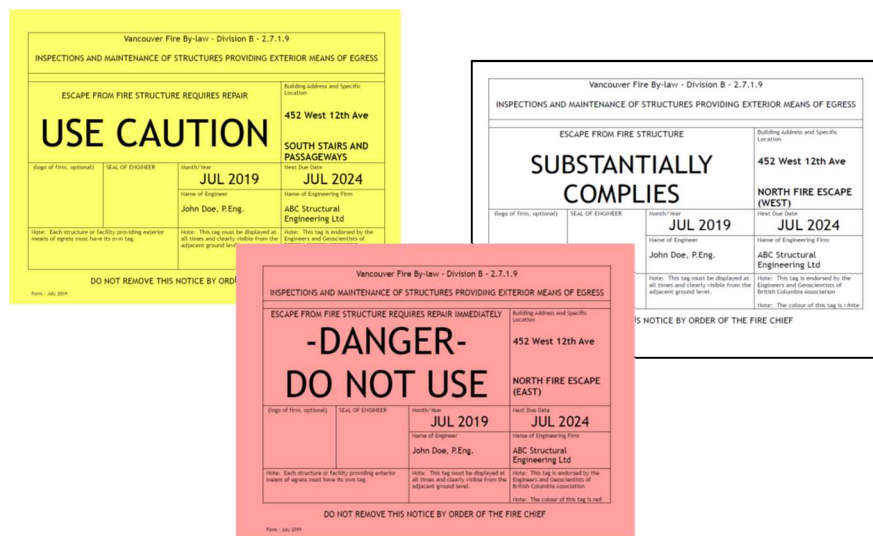


February 9, 2021

Bulletin 2020–001- FI Rev. 1

Exterior Means of Egress Structures

Effective June 25, 2020, all buildings over 3 storeys in height other than single-family houses and duplexes with or without secondary suites are required to have professional structural engineers engaged in the inspection, testing, and repair of exterior means of egress. Each exterior means of egress structure must have a weather-resistant tag visible from the ground level which indicates whether the structure is safe to use, use with caution, or is unsafe to use.



The image shows three sample weather-resistant tags for exterior means of egress structures, as required by the Vancouver Fire By-law - Division B - 2.7.1.9. Each tag is designed to be visible from the ground level and includes the following information:

- Title:** ESCAPE FROM FIRE STRUCTURE REQUIRES REPAIR (for caution), SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIES, or -DANGER- DO NOT USE.
- Building address and specific location:** 452 West 12th Ave, SOUTH STAIRS AND PASSAGEWAYS, NORTH FIRE ESCAPE (WEST), and NORTH FIRE ESCAPE (EAST).
- Date of inspection:** JUL 2019.
- Name of Engineer:** John Doe, P.Eng.
- Name of Engineering Firm:** ABC Structural Engineering Ltd.
- Expiration date:** JUL 2024.
- Notes:** Each tag includes a note stating that the tag must be displayed at all times and clearly visible from the adjacent ground level.
- Footer:** DO NOT REMOVE THIS NOTICE BY ORDER OF THE FIRE CHIEF.

BACKGROUND

Exterior passageways, exterior stairs, and other types of exterior means of egress (including fire escapes) intended for use by building occupants and firefighters during emergencies, are commonplace on buildings of all types and sizes. The Fire By-law requires that the property owner or owner's authorized agent maintain in good repair, and keep means of egress unobstructed at all times.

"Division B, Sentence 2.7.1.6.(1) Means of egress shall be maintained in good repair and free of obstructions."

Recent incidents involving persons seriously injured because of falls from exterior means of egress that were in disrepair prompted the City of Vancouver to implement a new provision in the Fire By-law. The new By-law provision will require that the property owner engage a professional structural engineer every 5 years to inspect, assess and re-certify the structural adequacy of all existing exterior means of egress and their guards where the difference in floor or ground level is more than 2 m. This By-law provision does not apply to residential buildings that contain only one or two principal dwelling units.

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VANCOUVER FIRE RESCUE SERVICES
Community Safety & Risk Reduction Division
Fire Prevention, Investigations, and Public Education

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT AND ENGINEERING

Structural engineers undertaking this work should refer to the Practice Advisory on Structural Assessments of Exterior Means of Egress issued by The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia.

Tags indicating the results of the structural assessment are to be completed, signed and sealed by the professional engineer. The originals of the tags should be retained by the property owner and made available for inspection by Vancouver Fire Rescue Services. The property owner is responsible for producing weather-resistant copies of these tags in their correct colour, and then installing and maintaining these tags at each exterior means of egress facility such that they are visible from the ground level. Templates of the tags can be found on the City website.

A white tag indicates the means of egress substantially complies with the Fire By-law and is considered to be in good repair.

A yellow tag indicates the means of egress must be used with caution – repairs or further assessment is required.

A red tag indicates the means of egress is unsafe to use, requires immediate repair, additional fire and life safety measures in the interim, and notification to Vancouver Fire Rescue Services. For example, a 24 hour fire watch and patrol will be required or a temporary second means of egress must be provided. The unsafe means of egress should be rendered inaccessible to building occupants at each access point to the means of egress until repairs are completed.

For all repairs, a building permit may be required before carrying out the work. Once the repair has been completed, the means of egress must be re-assessed and re-tagged.

INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services may conduct inspections of the building and if a tag is missing, illegible, or indicates a past expiry date, a Fire Chief's Order may be issued or other legal actions may commence against the property owner.

Signed,

Rick Cheung, P.Eng. CP, FEC
Assistant Chief Fire Protection Engineer

Ray Bryant
Assistant Chief Community Safety

Rob Renning
Deputy Chief Community Safety

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