



## Storage Spaces in a Storage Garage Information Sheet

### Background

The increase in volume and type of items stored in storage garages (parkades) has prompted many BC municipalities to embark on programs to bring their parkades into compliance with applicable codes and bylaws. West Vancouver has examined our level of compliance and compared it with other local municipalities and has identified a disparity in compliance.

Multi-family residential buildings are designed and constructed in compliance with District of West Vancouver Bylaws and Development guidelines. These Bylaws and guidelines regulate the number and dimension of parking stalls. Changes to these stalls may either require a permit or may not be permitted.

The construction of storage garages<sup>1</sup> is regulated under the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC). Storage garages are specifically designed for the parking or storage of vehicles. It is the very specific intention of both the BCBC and the British Columbia Fire Code (BCFC) to limit the risk of fire in storage garages to only that of parked vehicles.

The BCBC considers and treats a storage garage to be a different occupancy than a storage space; therefore, a fire separation with a minimum fire resistance rating of 1.5 hours<sup>2</sup> is required between the storage garage and any storage spaces. BCFC defers to the BCBC on this requirement<sup>3</sup>. Separate storage rooms are often incorporated as part of the original construction of commercial and multi-family residential buildings. These rooms are specifically designed for safe storage purposes, with fire-rated doors, walls, and fire sprinklers.

Secure, clearly visible storage of bikes, typically contained inside a permitted chain link fenced enclosure, does not constitute either a hazard or an ongoing maintenance issue with respect to the BC Building Code or the BC Fire Code. The District of West Vancouver has approved this type of installation under permit.

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<sup>1</sup> A storage garage (parkade) is a building, or part thereof, intended primarily for the storage or parking of motor vehicles and containing no provision for the repair or servicing of such vehicles. As a subsidiary use, storage garages may also contain space for parking or storing other vehicles (bicycles, boat, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> British Columbia Building Code 3.3.5.6 (1) "A storage garage shall be separated from other occupancies by a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating not less than 1.5 h."

<sup>3</sup> British Columbia Fire Code. 2.2.1.1 (1) "Where a building contains more than one major occupancy, such occupancies shall be separated from each other in conformance with the British Columbia Building Code."



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If a storage space was constructed in a storage garage, whether recently or in the past, it is likely that it was constructed without the benefit of permit or inspection approvals, and is not permitted to be there. A 'legally non-conforming' or 'grandfathered' status does not apply to these installations.

Additionally, firewood is an accumulation of combustibles and is not permitted in parking garages.

### Code Compliant Storage Space

Should you wish to construct a code compliant storage room in a storage garage, please be aware that:

- Not all buildings are designed with additional space in which to construct a rated storage room.
- It may also not be feasible or possible to construct a rated storage room in a parking stall.
- It is necessary to have a preliminary consultation with both DWV Planning Department, and Permits and Inspections Department staff to determine the viability of the proposal.
- A Building Permit and/or a Development Permit may be required. Review and comment by a Building Code Consultant may also be required. Electrical and Fire Sprinkler permits may be required depending on the extent of the work.

### Regarding your Fire Inspection

The Fire Inspector will be assessing your storage garage for compliance. If the storage garage contains non-compliant storage, the Fire Inspector will serve you with a *Conditional Pass* on your Routine Annual Fire Inspection report in order to give you time to correct the violation.

It is the Strata Corporation's responsibility to ensure that the property is used and managed in compliance with codes and bylaw regulations. It is therefore our expectation that you will bring the storage garage use into compliance as requested and remove all non-compliant storage space(s) and return your storage garage to its original use as vehicle storage.

### By Order Of the Fire Chief

Bring the storage garage into compliance with the BCBC. By January 1, 2024 you must remove all non-compliant storage spaces and/or lockers that are not separated by a fire separation with a fire resistance rating of 1.5 from the storage garage.



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### For Further Explanation of BCFC and BCBC

For further information and clarification of technical details and codes you may wish to retain a Professional Fire Protection Engineer. The expense of the review is to be paid by the Owner - not the Fire Department or Municipality.

### How to Contact the Fire Department Regarding this Order

Please visit <https://westvancouver.ca/home-building-property/emergency-preparedness/fire-rescue/fire-prevention> and read the following documents; Violation Notice: British Columbia Building Code Violation, Storage Spaces in a Storage Garage Information Sheet, and Frequently Asked Questions Storage Spaces in a Storage Garage. These documents have been developed to assist with understanding the enforcement of storage garage violations.

Should you have further inquiries, please direct your inquiries regarding your Violation Notice: British Columbia Building Code Violation to [fireprevention@westvancouver.ca](mailto:fireprevention@westvancouver.ca) or 604-925-7392. Please include your building address, name, phone number and email. Inquiries will be returned in the order in which they are received.

**Please note:** Only inquiries directed to the email or phone number noted above will be returned. Do not contact your Fire Inspector directly