



Frequently Asked Question Storage Spaces in a Storage Garages

1. Why has my storage garage failed or been given a conditional pass?

The Fire Inspector assessed your storage garage and storage space and determined that a fire separation with a fire resistance rating of 1.5 hours between the two is not present. As such, your building is in violation of the *British Columbia Building Code (BCBC)*. The Fire Inspector has served you with a conditional pass on your routine Annual Fire Inspection report in order to give you time to correct the violation.

2. How long do I have to remove my non-compliant storage?

By January 1, 2024 you must remove all storage spaces that are not separated by a fire separation with a fire resistance rating of 1.5 hours from the storage garage.

3. Why have you given such a long deadline for compliance?

The large number of incidents and residents affected has guided us in determining the proper approach to these violations. A 2 year deadline will be given for compliance. The conditional pass and long deadline are to allow our inspectors to begin enforcement while not being overwhelmed and unable to complete their other inspections, as well as give ample time to residents and stratas to correct their violations. We feel this measured approach will lessen the impact of this enforcement on our residents and encourage compliance.

4. What is the difference between a conditional pass and a fail?

A conditional pass is issued to address non-compliant storage spaces. You have until January 1, 2024 to bring the storage garage use into compliance as requested by removing all non-compliant storage spaces and returning your storage garage to its original use as vehicle storage.

A failed inspection is issued when there is an accumulation of combustibles within the parking area. You have 30 days to remove the identified combustibles before re-inspection.

5. Why did I fail instead of a conditional pass?

A failed inspection is issued when there is an accumulation of combustibles within the storage garage. A conditional pass is issued to address non-compliant storage spaces. You may receive a fail and a conditional pass on one inspection report. You are required to remove the identified combustibles within 30 days. You have until January 1, 2024 to bring the parkade use into compliance as requested and remove all non-compliant storage spaces and return the storage garage to its original use as vehicle storage.



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6. What is considered a combustible?

Combustible means able to catch fire and burn easily.

7. What constitutes an accumulation of combustibles?

A mass or quantity of combustible materials that has been collected or has gradually gathered or been acquired.

8. On what authority can you issue this order?

Inspectors are authorized as Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner and are required by the *British Columbia Fire Services Act (BCFSA)* and the District of West Vancouver's Fire Rescue Bylaw No. 5163, 2021 to provide for a regular system of inspection of hotels and public buildings in the municipality. A multi-family residential building is classified as a hotel under the *British Columbia Fire Code (BCFC)*.

British Columbia Fire Services Act

Fire Code Administration Regulation

1. Persons responsible for administration and enforcement

- (2) The fire commissioner and local assistants are designated as the persons responsible for the enforcement of the British Columbia Fire Code.

British Columbia Fire Code

2.2.1 General

2.2.1.1. Fire Separations

- 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.

British Columbia Building Code

3.3.5.6. Storage Garage Separation

- 1) a storage garage shall be separated from other occupancies by a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating not less than 1.5 hours.

Violations of the *British Columbia Building Code* are enforced with the support of the Planning and Development Service division, through the Building Permit department and Building Inspectors.



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9. Where does it say I can't have storage in my garage?

It's important to note that storage rooms are a different occupancy classification than storage garages. Many multi-residential properties have separate storage rooms that comply with the *BC Building Code* and the *BC Fire Code*.

The *BC Building Code* defines a storage garage as a part of 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."

The *BC Building Code* also indicates that "as a subsidiary use, storage garages may also contain space for parking or storing other vehicles (bicycles, boat, etc. . .)"

10. If I passed before, why not now? Inspectors have not had an issue with my storage before.

The increase in volume and type of items stored in parkades has prompted many BC municipalities to bring parkades into compliance with applicable codes and bylaws. West Vancouver examined compliance in our community in comparison to other municipalities and identified a disparity in compliance.

Your Strata Corporation is responsible for ensuring that the property is used and managed in compliance with all codes and bylaws. While we understand that this is a change for many residents, it is the expectation that storage garage use will be brought into compliance; non-compliant storage space(s) will be removed and the storage garage will be returned to its intended use as vehicle storage.

11. Why is some storage permitted in some garages?

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, as long as they can remain in place during a fire without affecting aisles and means of egress and so as not to interfere with firefighting activities.



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12. What about the 2019 City of Vancouver Bulletin regrading storage in underground parking facilities?

We have spoken with the author, Assistant Chief Cheung, regarding the City of Vancouver's "Storage in Underground Parking Facilities" bulletin, dated February 21, 2019. He offered further clarity into the bulletin, indicating that cages, not impeding means of egress nor the use of parking stall space may, with the required permit, be constructed. These cages are not for storing accumulations of combustibles. If an accumulation of combustibles is present, a Fire Engineer's report is requested at the cost of the owner, or the owner must remove the accumulation of combustibles. All storage must be visible and can not be in a room. Any room must be built with permits and built to code with a 1.5 hr fire separation rating. Any garden shed or container is viewed as a room. Any change of use within a stall is unacceptable and will trigger involvement of property use inspectors and zoning department. This change of use within a stall is a contravention of the Development Permit.

13. I have a letter from the Fire Inspector saying my storage is OK.

We are aware of a letter that was issued 18 years ago from the West Vancouver Fire Prevention Office regarding the allowance of storage lockers and firewood only.

However, 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.

14. Can I have a metal shelf?

In the past one metal shelf may have been acceptable if kept neat and free of an accumulation of combustibles. However, multiple shelves invite an accumulation of too much storage and have been ordered removed.

Fire Inspectors are working together to apply a fair and consistent set of criteria equitable to each other and our neighboring municipalities. Within this criteria, each building is assessed on a case by case basis.

It is your Strata Corporation's responsibility to ensure that the property is used and managed in compliance with Provincial Legislation and Municipal bylaws.



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15. Can I use a shipping container as a storage resolution?

Shipping containers within the Municipality of West Vancouver must comply with Fire Rescue Bylaw No. 5163, 2021 Section 9.66 Shipping Containers

16. Can I get my storage approved?

If you want 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;
- preliminary consultation with both Planning and Building department staff to determine the viability of the proposal;
- a building permit and/or a development permit may be required which may include engaging a Building Code Consultant;
- electrical and fire sprinkler permits may be required depending on the extent of the work; and
- storage within the parking area, including free standing storage containers, is not permitted.

17. What am I supposed to do with my storage?

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- electrical and fire sprinkler permits may be required depending on the extent of the work; and
- storage within the parking area, including free standing storage containers, is not permitted.

You may also choose to explore off-site storage as an option.



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18. Who can I talk to for further explanation?

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.

19. How can I get more information?

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 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.