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Issues Alert

March 11, 2009

Issue

Cabinet has approved the changes to the building code that have come out of the High Intensity Residential Fires Report. (HIRF) Report. An announcement is expected March 12, 2009.

Background

- CHBA – Alberta was involved in consultations undertaken by Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA) in response to proposed changes to building and fire codes that came from the High Intensity Residential Fires Report.
- Several fire and safety code changes were anticipated in response to the report including addition requirements for gypsum in attached garages in single family homes, installation of non-venting soffits, and changes to window sizes/spacing on side elevations.
- CHBA – Alberta's involvement in addition to the AMA consultation has been via work done through AHITC, presenting at the Building Technical Council and directly with AMA staff to mitigate changes
- CHBA – Alberta stressed with AMA that adequate time to implement changes had to be considered between announcing and enforcing the changes codes.
- In spite of our efforts, the Alberta Fire Code (AFC) changes come into effect immediately on March 11. There is likely little in these changes that will impact single family residential housing.
- Alberta Building Codes (ABC) changes will come into effect May 3rd.
- At the time of issuing this information we do not have the details of the codes changes, although we have previously shared the intent of the changes the details in language are still under wraps at AMA.
- Local CHBA members will have education opportunities on the changes via PHBIA's builder breakfast/luncheon sessions at the end of April.

Response

- CHBA – Alberta was please to be included in the consultations.
- CHBA – Alberta has concerns regarding some of the changes that may lead to other serious problems such as mould in building envelope caused by the susceptibility of gypsum when exposed to moisture.
- These changes would have been thoroughly reviewed and scientifically challenged if they had gone through the normal National Building Codes process, which they did not.

Key Messages

- CHBA – Alberta is uncomfortable with any changes to ABC that have not been vetted through the NBC process.

- Changes will add to the cost of new housing with no scientific proof that they will have any impact on high intensity residential fires.

Spokespeople

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