

PANELBOARDS IN “SECONDARY SUITES”**Date of Issue: February 8, 2023****Information Bulletin No: IB-EL #####-##**

The following bulletin provides guidance on the application of rules pertaining to the 2021 BC Electrical Code Regulation. The requirements of local municipal authorities having jurisdiction may vary. Prior to undertaking work, installers should consult with local authorities having jurisdiction to determine their requirements.

Scope:

This bulletin provides clarification on Rule 26-602 for requirements of installing panelboards in a subdivision(s) of a dwelling unit.

Code definitions related to Rule 26-600

Dwelling Unit – one or more rooms for the use of one or more persons as a housekeeping unit with cooking, eating, living, and sleeping facilities.

There is no definition for “secondary suite” in the BC Electrical code. Suite is understood to mean a self-contained dwelling unit located within a building of residential occupancy that contains another dwelling unit, where both dwelling units constitute a single real estate entity.

26-602 Panelboards in dwelling units (see Appendix B)

1) A panelboard shall be installed in every dwelling unit except for:

- a) dwelling units in hotels and motels; and*
- b) dwelling units that have been created by subdivision of a single dwelling and are not individually metered for electrical power consumption.*

2) Every panelboard installed in accordance with Subrule 1) shall have a single supply protected by overcurrent devices, and this supply shall be capable of being disconnected without disconnecting the supply to any other dwelling unit.

The rule says that both conditions (subdivision of a single dwelling **and** not individually metered) must be present for the panelboard exemption. The rule does not require separate metering (or separately fed) panelboards. Therefore, if the installer chooses not to have the suite individually metered, no separate panelboard is required.

*Reminder, Subrule 2 only applies if the conditions of Subrule 1 apply.

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Table 1 - Panelboard requirements in sub-divided dwellings

	Scenario	# of Utility meters	# of Panel's required (minimum)	Panel location	Rules / Notes	Example	Load Calculation
1	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division	1 <i>*not independently metered</i>	1	Anywhere within the building envelope	Since the panelboard is not installed in accordance with 26-602 1) we are not required to meet the conditions of 26-602 2). 26-602-2 only applies if the subdivisions are individually metered and created by a sub-division.	Home with a "suite" – Only panel is in main unit living room. Is this compliant? Yes	As per 8-200 1)
2	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division	1 <i>*not independently metered</i>	2 provided <i>*(not required)</i>	Anywhere within the building envelope. (Suite panel may be a loadcenter)	Is this second panel actually a result of needing to comply with 26-602 1)? Or was this something that was done out of convenience? (see note 1)	Home with a "suite" – 200 amp Main panel is in Garage and a 100 amp sub-panel from the 200 amp panel feeds the secondary "suite". Is this compliant? Yes	As per 8-200 1)

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3	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division	1 (dual lug MB) <i>*not independently metered</i>	**2 provided (not required)	One combination panel in each subdivision of the dwelling	These are <u>not</u> individually metered, therefore 26-602 2) does not apply.	Home with a “suite” – 100 amp panel is in Garage and a 100 amp panel is in the secondary “suite”. Both fed from the meter. Is this compliant? Yes	As per 8-200 1)
4	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division	2	2	One in each subdivision of the dwelling	These <u>are</u> individually metered, therefore 26-602 2) <u>does</u> apply. A separate individually fed panel must be located in each subdivision.	Home with a “suite” – 200 amp service in main home and 100A service in “suite”. Each fed from a single meterbase (or a dual MB c/w 2 meters). Is this compliant? Yes	As per 8-200 2)
5	Single Dwelling with a separate “coach-house / laneway home”	1	2	One in main home and one in separate building	Since we have two separate buildings and not a sub-division of a single dwelling a panel would be required in each.	Home with 400A main service c/w 200 amp feeder to coach-house. A panel in the home and a separate panel within the coach-house.	As per 8-200 2)

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Table 2- Panelboard location examples

	Scenario	Panel Location	Compliance
1	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division (separately metered) (two panelboards)	1 panel in Garage / 1 panel in suite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliant
2	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division (separately metered) (two panelboards)	Both panels in garage	Is the garage a common area? Do both parties have access? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes to both, then compliant If no to either, then non-compliant
3	Single Family Dwelling with a sub-division (separately metered) (two panelboards)	Both panels in common area (i.e., common entry, laundry, etc.)	Do both parties have access? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, then compliant

Another frequent question is around the location of the panelboards in **Scenario 4**. Contractors sometimes request that both panels be located in the same area accessible to both sub-divided occupants. Below are the rules that govern locations and a table of examples

14-106 Location and grouping

Overcurrent devices shall be located in readily accessible places, except as provided for elsewhere in this Code, and shall be grouped where practicable.

14-406 Location of control devices

- 1) Control devices, with the exception of isolating switches, shall be readily accessible.
- 2) Remotely controlled devices shall be considered to be readily accessible if the means of controlling them are readily accessible.

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The code does not articulate or determine for who the ready access is a requirement.

In **Scenarios 1, 2, and 3** listed above in Table 1, the occupant of the sub-divided dwelling is **not** the party that requires access. The owner of the building (landlord, leaser, etc.) is responsible for the safe operation of the electrical infrastructure and systems and **is** the party for whom ready access is a requirement.

Provincial Safety Manager – Electrical

References:

Safety Standards Act

Electrical Safety Regulation

Safety Standards General Regulation

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