

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PRESENTATION: Accessibility in Residential Buildings – Requirements & Common Compliance Errors

- Q1. What is the 25 inches maximum dimension measurement for the toe and knee clearance?**
- A1. The 2009 ICC A117.1 Section 306.3.2 gives a 25-inch maximum depth for toe and knee clearance. The 25-inch maximum depth limits how much of the required clear floor space may extend underneath an element. This facilitates reach to operable parts or usable space, since a forward reach does not extend far beyond the toes.
- Q2. Where should we go to establish when and where accessibility provisions are required for a renovation project- i.e. scoping? Would that all be in Chapter 11 of the NYC BC?**
- A2. Refer to BC 1101.3 Special provisions for prior code buildings. There are two options:
1. BC 1101.3.1 Requirements based on change of occupancy or how a space is used.
 2. BC 1101.3.2 Requirements based on value of alterations
- Q3. Is a 5'-0" turning space required in front of an elevator door?**
- A3. Unless addressed by a specific requirement in the building code, requirement for turning spaces in the ICC A117.1 or other applicable regulations, spaces are not required to provide for a turning space, this includes lobbies, offices, and meeting rooms.
- Q4. Do all elevators have to comply with accessibility requirements or only a percentage of all elevators?**
- A4. Refer to BC 1109.6 Elevators. It states that: *All passenger elevators on an accessible route shall be accessible and comply with Section 3001.3.*
- Q5. Egress stairs are mostly governed by Chapter 10; however, convenience stairs (not for egress) that are not part of an accessible route or a means of egress do not need to comply with the requirements from Chapter 10. When do we apply accessibility to stairs?**
- A5. There are sections in the Building Code Chapter 11 that specifically call out for where stairs must comply with the 2009 ICC A 117.1 requirements. For example, BC 1109.15 Stairways calls for stairways located alongside accessible routes to comply with the standard.
- Q6. In kitchens is it acceptable to put a dishwasher under the required 30" work surface area?**
- A6. Work surface is required in a common space kitchen or kitchenette if cooktop or range is provided (ICC A117.1 804). A clear floor space positioned for a forward approach must be provide (ICC A117.1 902.2), dishwasher is not permitted underneath that space.

Q7. When are railings required for steps?

A7. Handrails are required for stairways as indicated in BC 1009.12. There are exceptions that apply identifying where handrails are not required or where a handrail can be provided on one side only.

Q8. Do mechanical/utility rooms need to comply with accessibility?

A8. Refer to BC 1103.2.9 Equipment spaces. This section states the following: *Spaces frequented only by personnel for maintenance, repair or monitoring of equipment are not required to be accessible. Such spaces include, but are not limited to, elevator pits, elevator penthouses, mechanical, electrical or communications equipment rooms, piping or equipment catwalks, water or sewerage treatment pump rooms and stations, electrical substations and transformer vaults, and highway and tunnel utility facilities.*

Q9. In a 4-story residential building without an elevator, where the 1st floor is the only accessible floor, can a bicycle room be located in the cellar as long as an accessible bicycle room is provided on the 1st floor for 50% of the accessible units?

A9. Refer to BC 1107.3 Accessible spaces. This section states the following: *Rooms and spaces available to the general public or available for common use by residents of Accessible units, Type B+NYC units, or Type B units shall be accessible. Accessible spaces shall include, but not be limited to, spaces for residents' use, such as laundry rooms, refuse disposal and storage locations, mailbox areas, recreational facilities, assembly and tenants' meeting rooms, storage rooms, parking areas, toilet and bathing rooms, kitchen, living and dining areas, any exterior spaces, including patios, terraces and balconies, management offices, and stores. Therefore, bicycle room must have an accessible route leading to it.*

Q10. For a building that has more than one primary entrance, do all of them have to be accessible?

A10. Refer to BC 1105.1 Public entrances. It states that: *In addition to accessible entrances required by Sections 1105.1.1 through 1105.1.6, all public entrances shall be accessible.* Note that there are exceptions that apply to this section, but in general yes, all public entrances must be accessible.

Q11. What year edition of the ICC A 117.1 is referenced in the 2014 NYC BC?

A11. The current edition year of the standard is listed in BC Chapter 35 of the Building Code. The 2009 ICC A 117.1 is referenced in the 2014 NYC BC.

Q12. How many washers and dryers are required to be accessible?

A12. Refer to the BC 1107.2.8 - Laundry equipment in accessible common-use areas as required in BC 1107.3 shall comply with BC E105.2.

1. Per BC E105.2.1 Washing machines:

- If three or less are provided, at least 1 comply with ICC A117.1, including Section 611 (Washing Machines and Clothes Dryers), and shall be front loading.

- If more than three, at least 2 comply with ICC A117.1, including Section 611 and shall be front loading.
2. Per BC E105.2.2 Clothes dryers:
- If three or less are provided, at least 1 comply with ICC A117.1, including Section 611 (Washing Machines and Clothes Dryers), and shall be front loading.
 - If more than three, at least 2 comply with ICC A117.1, including Section 611 and shall be front loading

Q13. If only one parking space is required, must a van space be provided?

A13. Yes. Refer to BC 1106.5, which states: *For every six or fraction of six accessible parking spaces, at least one space shall be a van-accessible parking space.*

Q14. Can two parking spaces share a common access aisle?

A14. Two parking spaces shall be permitted to share a common access aisle. 502.4.2 Width. Access aisles serving car and van parking spaces shall be 60 inches minimum in width.

Q15. Do bathrooms or toilet rooms in laundry rooms of multiple dwellings have to be accessible?

A15. Where a common use laundry facility is provided with toilet or bathing facilities, those toilet and bathing rooms must comply with the Accessibility requirements of Building Code Chapter 11 and the 2009 edition of ICC/ANSI A117.1.

Q16. Can laundry machines in Type B+NYC dwellings be stacked?

A16. Building code section E105.2 specifies the requirements for laundry equipment and references section 1107.2.8 for laundry within dwelling units. Such washers and dryers must be front-loading and comply with ANSI A117.1, section 611. Compliance with section 611 may be feasible for both stacked and non-stacked washers and dryers.

Q17. Do apartment balconies have to be accessible and at the same level as the interior?

A17. Exterior balconies and similar spaces are not exempt from accessibility requirements. However, building code section 1107.4 allows for such spaces to be constructed with a maximum 4" change in elevation, measured from the adjacent interior floor elevation. Accessibility may then be achieved through the construction of a ramp or platform.

However, the constructed balcony guards and handrails must be compliant, requiring no further modification when such platform or ramp is constructed or installed

Q18. Where does the Building Code outline the requirements or definition of adaptability?

A18. The term is not defined in the building code. Building code chapter 11 contains only a few instances in which components within dwelling units may be later modified in order to comply with accessibility requirements. Examples of those include door reversibility in section 1107.2.1; kitchen countertops in 1107.2.3.1; appliances in 1107.2.3.2 and 1107.2.3.3; grab bars in P102.8.3.

Q19. Do ALL bathrooms and bedrooms need to be accessible in an apartment - or just 1 bathroom and 1 bedroom?

A19. Chapter 11 of the 2014 New York City Building Code: *1101.2 Design. Buildings and facilities shall be designed and constructed to be accessible in accordance with this code and [2009] ICC A117.1.* Furthermore, refer to Section 1102.1, which defines (3) classifications: Accessible Unit, Type B Unit, and Type B+NYC Unit. Each classification provides a route to accessibility compliance, clearly detailed in BC 1107. The level of accessibility will be dependent upon which classification the unit is designed to comply with.

Q20. What are the requirements for hand-held shower sprays?

A20. The 2009 edition of ICC A117.1 provides location requirements to hand showers which are specific to the type of shower, i.e. transfer or roll-in. However, in all cases, the hand shower must be located within the specified reach range for operable parts – 15 inches minimum to 48 inches maximum, above the floor.

Q21. Are signs required to include Braille?

A21. Signage accessibility requirements may be found in building code section 1110. But the requirement to include Braille will depend on the type of signage you are providing. For example, directional signage, per 1110.2 is used to indicate the route to the nearest like accessible element where there are inaccessible entrances, inaccessible toilets, elevators not serving an accessible route, and at inaccessible exits serving accessible spaces.

For further technical questions, email ConstructionCodes@buildings.nyc.gov.