

## Legal basement suites

With today's questionable economy, people are turning to alternative ways of generating extra income to help pay for expenses. One way that is becoming popular, is developing a residential basement in to a legal suite. Electrical and building requirements for a legal suite differ depending on the city you live in. I would like to compare the requirements of the city of Edmonton to The city of Sherwood park.

Basement kitchens are one of the requirements necessary for a legal suite. This means to create rental space, you require an area with a fridge, sink and stove. The electrical code requirements for this are the same in both cities being no arc fault protection required for the fridge or for counter/island/peninsula outlets. Here's the difference, in Edmonton if you install a kitchen in the basement, and there is no application for a legal suite, it is classified as a bar area and kitchen code requirements do not apply. In Sherwood park, if you build a basement kitchen without applying for a legal suite, it is classified as a kitchen and those different rules apply. There is a cost difference.

Smoke alarms are covered under the Alberta Building code and are a requirement for a legal suite. Alarms must be permanently connected to an unstitched power supply, have a built in battery back up and be interconnected. Here in is another dilemma. In Edmonton, if you have a finished basement that you wish to turn into a legal suite, you are allowed to use RF (radio frequency) interconnected smoke alarms. This means that the smoke alarms are "interconnected" through the use of radio frequencies, just like you garage door openers. If one alarm is activated, all RF units will sound. In Sherwood park, you are not allowed to use RF interconnection technology. This means that you must interconnect the new smoke alarms by installing wiring above finished ceilings. This some times causes damage to exiting drywall and of course extra expense.



The building code now requires that each new bedroom in a newly developed area, contain a smoke alarm within the bedrooms. Also if the bedrooms are served by a hall way, then a smoke alarm must also be installed within 5m of the bedroom doors. This is the same for both cities.

If your developing a legal basement suite, some of the other requirements are that a smoke alarm be installed on each level. If you have a 2 story home, one alarm is required on each of the second, main and basement levels. All smoke alarms must be interconnected within the dwelling unit of a house with a secondary suite.

*Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas that can build up to lethal concentrations in an enclosed space without the occupants being aware of it. (Building code Division B).* With the threat of this lethal gas, CO detectors are required outside of the sleeping quarters and can be battery operated. They must also be "mechanically fixed to a surface". The plug in style you find at the big box stores do not meet these requirements for the building code.

Finally, remember to always get your permits when ever you work on a construction or building projects. Check with your local inspectors as to their requirements pertaining to the project you are working on.