



Information to Know  
Before You Build  
Secondary Suites

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NOTE: The City of Yorkton adopts the National Building Code of Canada (NBC). Throughout this document the NBC will be referenced as the building code. All information in this document is provided from the NBC 2015 and current Zoning Bylaw.

It is beyond the scope of this publication to deal with all possible suite layouts and scenarios. The requirements and construction guidelines that follow are provided to assist you in designing the suite.

**DISCLAIMER: Nothing here relieves any person from complying with any Federal or Provincial law or regulation, bylaw, or any requirement of any lawful permit, order or license. If inconsistent with any Codes applicable to the inspection being done, the appropriate code requirements will be enforced.**

Updates and changes to this document can occur without notice at the discretion of the City of Yorkton, Building Services. It is the sole responsibility of the user to ensure they have the most current version available.

## 1.0 General Information

The purpose of the Secondary Suite Guide is to provide information on the building standard requirements for a single detached dwelling with a secondary suite, and intended to aid the homeowner, designer, and builder in the design and construction of secondary suites.

### *What is a secondary suite?*

**Secondary suite** means a self-contained dwelling unit with a prescribed floor area located in a building or portion of a building of only residential occupancy that contains only one other dwelling unit and common spaces, and where both dwelling units constitute a single real estate entity.

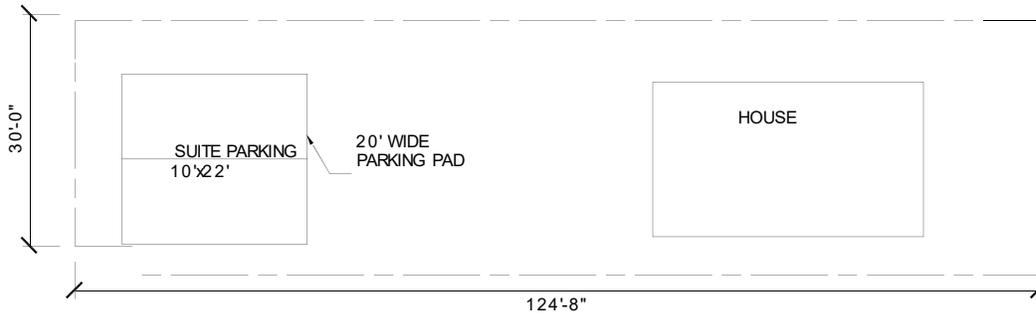
### *Can I develop a secondary suite in my house?*

A secondary suite can be developed in any house which meets the following criteria:

- A secondary suite is only permitted within a single detached dwelling.
- Not more than one secondary suite is permitted in any house.
- A secondary suite shall have no more than two bedrooms.
- The maximum floor area shall be no more than 80% of the floor area of the principle dwelling unit, or (861 f<sup>2</sup>) 80m<sup>2</sup>. whichever is the lesser. The minimum floor area for the secondary suite shall be (323 f<sup>2</sup>) 30m<sup>2</sup>
- One onsite parking space shall be provided for the secondary suite. This is in addition to the parking requirements of the main dwelling unit.

**What information do I have to bring with me in order to make an application for a building permit?**

1. You must present a well-drawn site plan or a copy of a (RPR) Surveyor's Certificate showing all property dimensions, location of all buildings, and location and size of the required parking.



2. Floor plans of all levels are required. Floor plans shall be to scale, be fully dimensioned, indicate location of all vertical smoke-tight barriers, and indicate the use of each room. As well, all appliances in the utility rooms are to be noted.



*Sample Floor plans*

3. Details of all construction (perimeter walls, interior partitions, vertical and horizontal smoke-tight barriers) are required. See Section 2.0 – Smoke-tight Barriers & STC Ratings and the checklist at the end of this handbook.
4. A ventilation design is required to be completed and be submitted at the same time as the application. Typically the design is completed by the mechanical contractor.
5. A Building Permit Application is to be completed.

## 2.0 Smoke-Tight Barriers & STC Rating

### What is a smoke-tight barrier?

A smoke-tight barrier is a construction assembly that impedes the movement of smoke from one dwelling unit to another dwelling unit and from common spaces to the rest of the building within a house with a secondary suite.

### Where are smoke-tight barriers required?

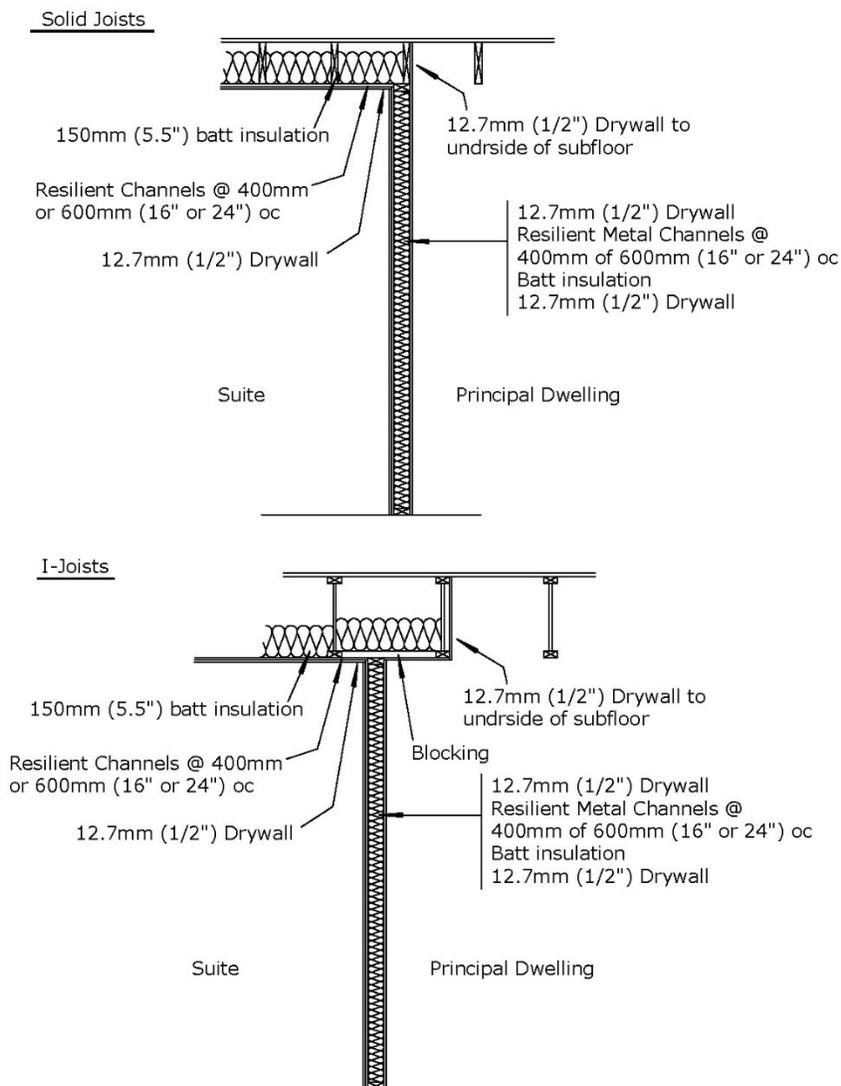
A smoke-tight barrier is required between:

1. The principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite (at the walls and ceiling).
2. Common spaces (at walls and ceiling) and the rest of the building.

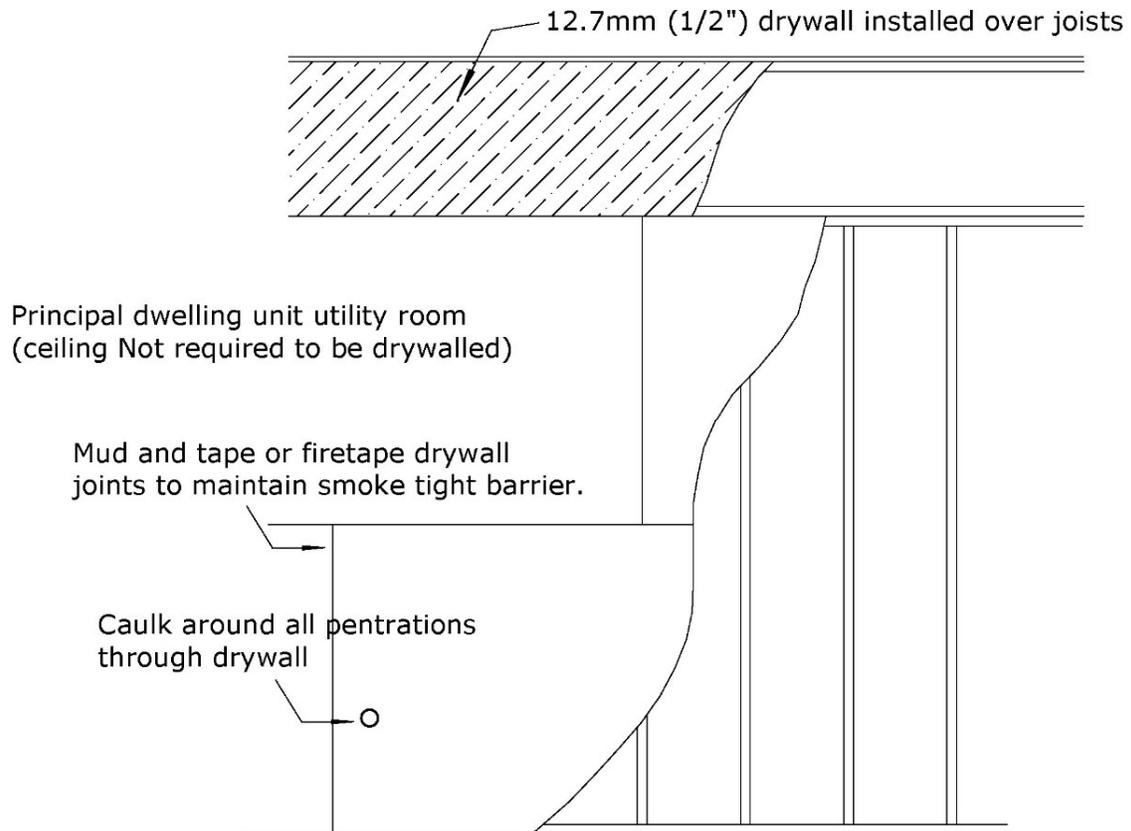
### How do I build a smoke-tight barrier?

A smoke-tight barrier is obtained by installing one layer of 12.7 mm (1/2") drywall on each side of the wall and one layer of 12.7 mm (1/2") drywall on the ceiling. The seams must be taped and mudded or fire taped.

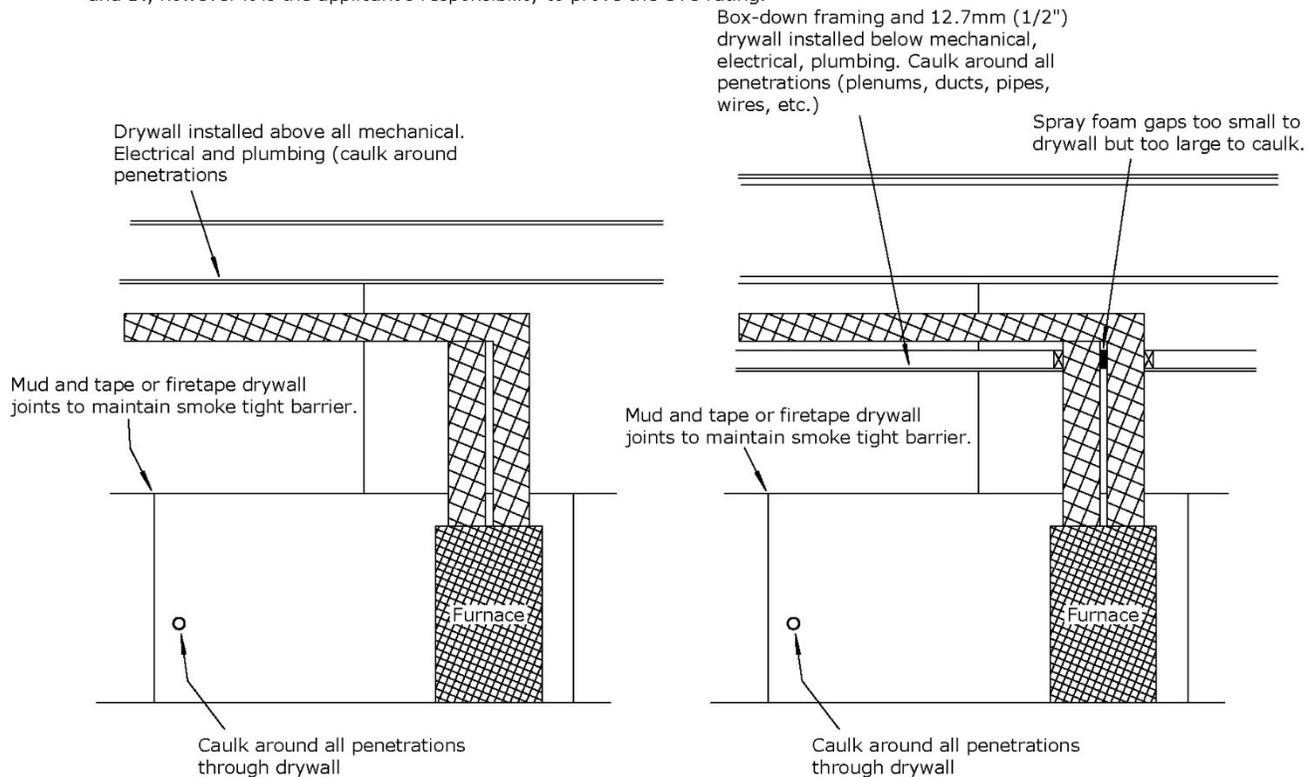
If the ceiling adjacent to a vertical smoke-tight barrier is not dry walled, the smoke-tight barrier [12.7 mm (1/2") drywall on the wall must extend to the underside of the subfloor.



All penetrations must be tight fitting or sealed with caulking or spray foam. Spray foam must be adequately protected with a thermal barrier as per NBC article 9.10.17.10.



Other construction assemblies are acceptable as per the NBC Section 9.10 and Tables TA9.10.3.1A and B., however it is the applicant's responsibility to prove the STC rating.



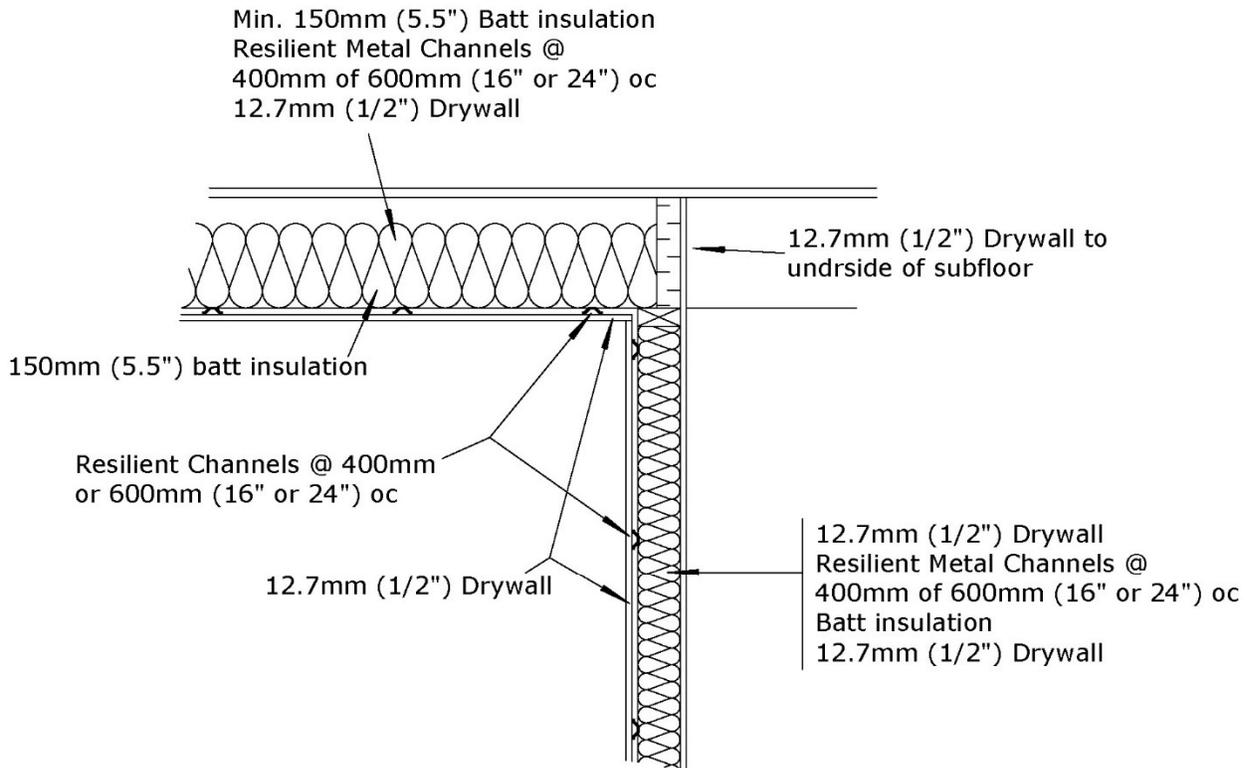
Doors located in a smoke-tight barrier are required to be 45 mm (1.75") thick solid core installed in a 38 mm (1½") thick wood jamb and have a self-closing device, or have a 20 minute fire protection rating. Doors with indents or decorative panels are not allowed in a smoke-tight barrier unless the door has a 20 minute fire protection rating.

**Can I use spray foam to provide the smoke-tight barrier above the wall?**

Yes, spray foam installed by a certified installer is permitted to fill the joist spaces above the wall. A thermal barrier is required to be installed over the spray foam.

**What is a sound transmission class and how do I build it?**

Sound transmission class (STC) is a rating that shows how well a material or assembly stops the transmission of sound. The higher the rating, the less sound is transferred. An STC of at least 43 is required between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite.



**Do I need to drywall the underside of my landing and stairs?**

The ceiling of a stair used by the suite must be dry walled. If the stairwell is not separated from the basement suite, the ceiling (underside of stairs above) must also have a minimum 43 STC.

## 3.0 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

### ***Where are smoke alarms required?***

Hardwired and interconnected smoke alarms are required:

1. In each bedroom.
2. On each floor within a dwelling unit, located in the hallway if the floor area serves bedrooms.
3. The landing area at the top of basement suite stairs.
4. In every area that is contained within a smoke-tight barrier (such as furnace rooms and stairwells)
5. In any room where a flexible duct penetrates a smoke-tight barrier.

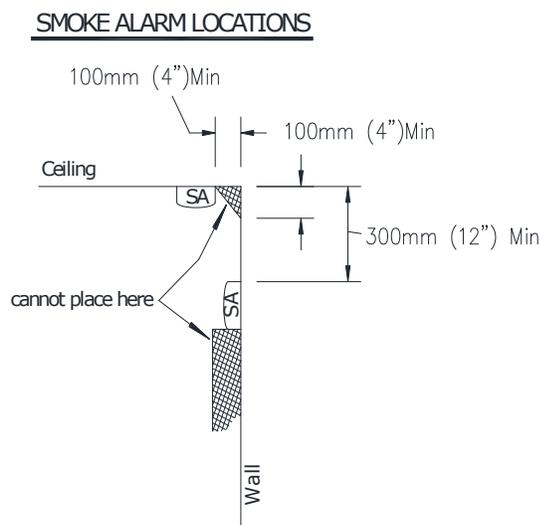
All smoke alarms must be interconnected, so that the activation of one smoke alarm will cause all other smoke alarms to sound in both the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite.

### ***I have an older house that does not have hard-wired smoke alarms. Do I have to install hardwired smoke alarms in all the rooms noted above?***

An existing house with a new secondary suite must have at least one smoke alarm installed in the principal dwelling unit that is interconnected with all of the secondary suite smoke alarms. All bedrooms in the principal dwelling that were previously permitted are not required to have the smoke alarms upgraded.

### **Where in the room should the smoke alarm be placed?**

Smoke alarms must be installed as per manufacturer's specifications. They must be placed a minimum of 100 mm (4") from the ceiling or wall and a maximum of 300 mm (12") below the ceiling when placed on the wall.



### ***Where are the carbon monoxide alarms required?***

Hardwired and interconnected carbon monoxide alarms are required in:

- Each bedroom or within 5 m (16 ft.) of each bedroom door
- In furnace rooms
- They must be interconnected between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite.
- The alarms shall be installed as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Carbon monoxide and smoke alarms can be combined into a single unit.

## 4.0 Handrails, Guards, Stairs

### ***What are the differences between guards and handrails?***

Guards are intended to prevent persons from falling off the edge of stairs, openings around stairs, or where the difference in walking surfaces of 600mm (24") or more. The guard must be able to withstand the pressure of a human body applied horizontally to it.

Handrails assist persons in ascending or descending stairs. They offer a continuous and graspable handhold to guide and support persons.

### ***My house is older and the stairs have never had guardrails or handrails. Do I need to have them installed?***

Yes. Access to the suite is required to be upgraded to reasonably meet current code requirements. Guards are required on stairs where there is a difference in elevation of more than 600 mm (24") and a handrail is required on all interior stairs with more than two risers.

### ***How high do my guards have to be?***

Guards are to be at least 900 mm (36") in height. If the top of guard is also to be used as a handrail, the maximum height is 965 mm (38").

### ***Do stairs have any requirements?***

Treads and risers must have a uniform rise and run in any one flight including the top and bottom risers. When choosing flooring it is important to ensure the existing stairs will meet this requirement after flooring is installed.

### ***How much head room is required over stairs and landings?***

The clear height over stairs and landings shall not be less than 1.95 m (6'-5").

## 5.0 Ventilation and Heating

### ***Can the furnace heat both dwelling units?***

No. Air cannot move from one dwelling unit into the other as this would negate the smoke-tight walls and ceiling. A separate heating source is required for the suite.

### ***What can I use to heat the suite?***

Common heating appliances for basement suites include in-floor heating, a separate furnace and electric baseboard heaters.

### ***The house already has an HRV. Do I need to install another HRV for the suite?***

The ventilation of the suite must be separate from the principal dwelling unit ventilation. There are many ways that the ventilation of the suite can be achieved; however, HRV's are commonly used as the principal exhaust fan and supply air fan. You should discuss your options with your mechanical contractor.

### ***Is flexible ducting allowed?***

Flexible ducting is allowed, however, if a flexible duct penetrates a smoke-tight barrier, a smoke alarm will be required to be installed in the room. For example, an HRV is located in a closet in a suite. A flexible duct goes up through the ceiling, penetrating the smoke-tight barrier. A smoke-alarm would be required to be installed in the closet.

The other option is to provide a non-combustible duct from the HRV to the drywall. After the duct penetrates the drywall, flexible ducting would be allowed.

## 6.0 Frequently Asked Questions

### ***When do these guidelines apply?***

These guidelines apply when developing a secondary suite or a second dwelling unit in a single detached dwelling.

### ***What if the suite was developed years ago?***

Suites that were developed before May 1, 2013 must comply with Property Standards Bylaw No.18/2017, Part 7

### ***Do I require a building permit for developing a basement suite?***

Yes, a building permit is required for any basement development.

### ***Where can I obtain a building permit?***

Permits are obtained by submitting the required information to Building Services, second floor of City Hall.

### ***What is the required height of basement?***

Rooms must be at least 1.95 m (6'-5") high. Under beams and duct work the height may be reduced to 1.85 m (6'-1").

Please see Section 5.0 Handrails, Guards, Stairs for the headroom required over stairs.

### ***What is the required size of a bedroom window?***

One window in each bedroom is required to have an unobstructed opening size of at least 0.35 sq m (3.8 sq ft). The minimum dimension of this window is 380 mm (15").

### ***Does that mean an 18"x18" window meets these requirements?***

No. The area that you climb through must be at least 0.35 m (3.8 sq ft). If the actual opening size of the window was 450 mm x 450 mm (18"x18"), the area would only be 0.20 sq m (2.25 sq ft).

### ***What if the bedroom window opens to a window well?***

The window well is to have a minimum of 760 mm (30") clear space in front of it, when the window is open. The well must be wider than the window.

### ***Are there any requirements to what door I use?***

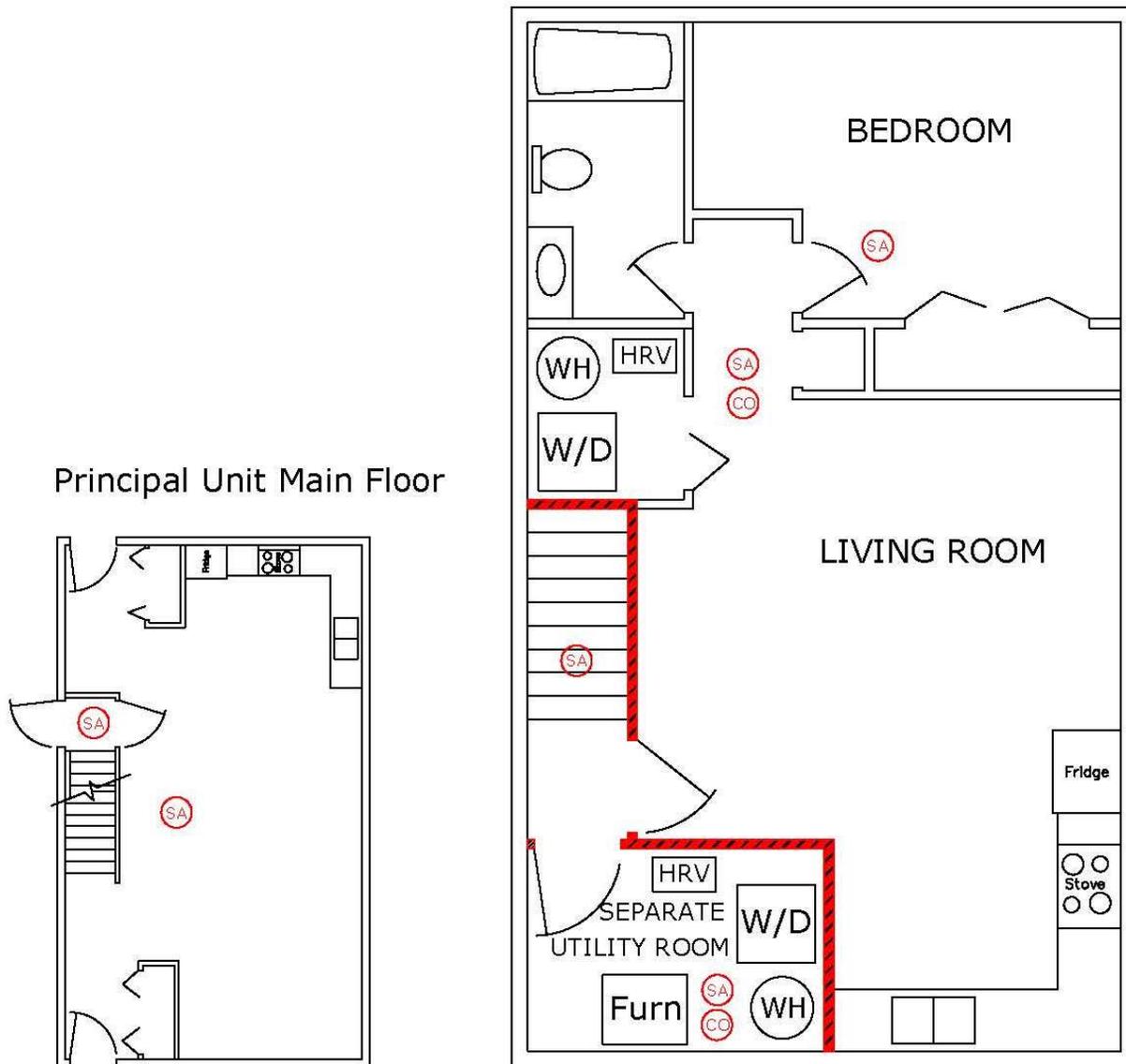
Doors within a smoke-tight barrier do have special requirements. Please see Section 2.0 Smoke-Tight Barriers & STC Rating.

All doors are required to be at least 1.89 m (6'-2 ½") high when the ceiling height is 1.95m (6'-5"). If the ceiling height is 2.1 m (7 ft) or higher, the door is required to be 1.98 m (6'-6").

Usually, interior doors are 760 mm (30") wide. Utility room doors, and any doors in the path to the exterior from the utility room are required to be at least 810 mm (32") wide.

## 7.0 Sample Drawings

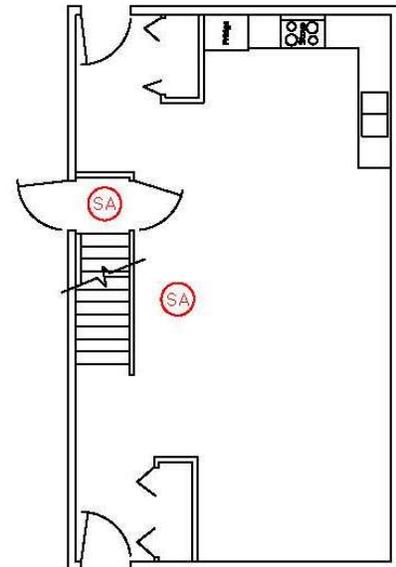
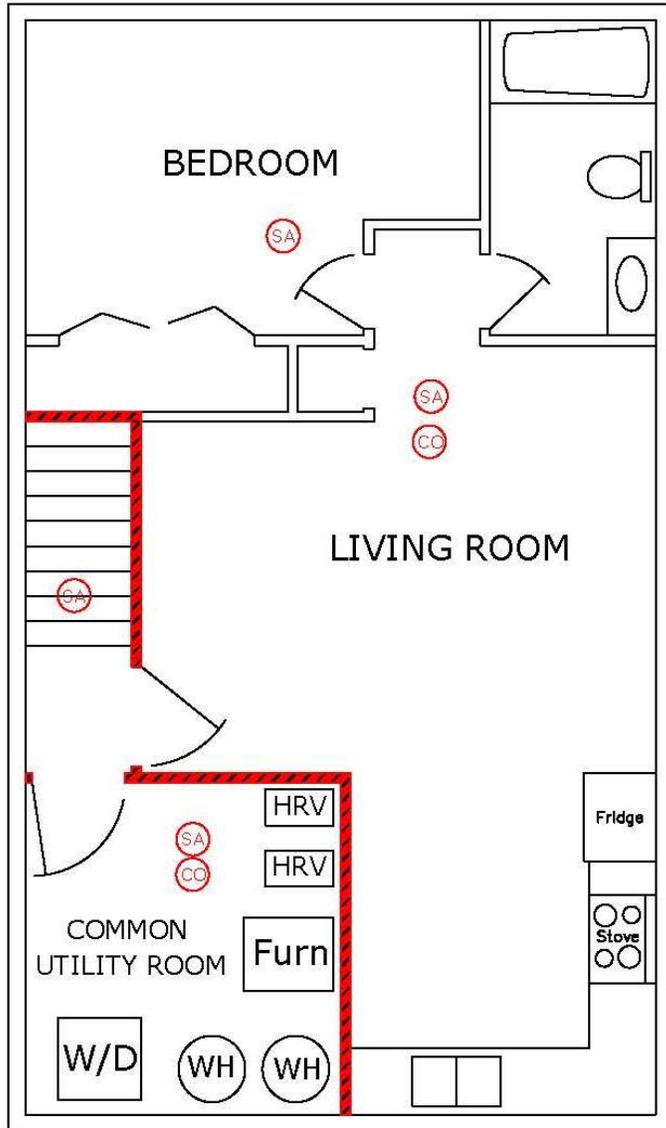
### Separate Utility Rooms, Common Stairwell



Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Principal Unit Area \_\_\_\_\_  
 Secondary Suite Area \_\_\_\_\_

 Smoke tight barrier  
 Smoke Alarm  
 CO Detector

# Common Utility Room, Common Stairwell (shared laundry equipment makes room common)



Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Principal Unit Area \_\_\_\_\_  
 Secondary Suite Area \_\_\_\_\_

-  Smoke tight barrier
-  Smoke Alarm
-  CO Detector



