



Media Release

Fire during construction phase is not cause to question building design

Remy Construction Site Fire in Richmond, British Columbia

Friday, May 6, 2011 – On May 3, there was a fire at the construction site of the Remy housing project in Richmond, British Columbia. The fire destroyed one of the first 6-storey wood-frame buildings constructed under B.C.’s revised building codes for mid-rise residential construction. An investigation has been launched by the City of Richmond Fire-Rescue Department and the Office of the Fire Commissioner of B.C. to determine the cause of the fire. There was no loss of life or injury to the public or to the emergency responders.

The vulnerability of any building in a fire is usually higher during the construction phase, when compared to the susceptibility of the building after it has been completed and occupied. This was a construction site fire, and as such, the project had not yet reached the point in time when the fire prevention and protection elements are all in place that would have otherwise been required in the completed building.

This fire is an unfortunate delay to a unique development, which will provide not only a number of affordable rental and home ownership options for residents of Richmond, B.C. but also place wood construction at the forefront of safe, innovative and cost-effective mid-rise building in Canada.

It is this desire for innovation that will continue to help drive the emergence of mid-rise wood buildings, as partners come together to educate and advocate for the benefits of wood use in construction based on facts supported by research and technical expertise. The Canadian Wood Council remains committed to the core health, safety and property protection objectives of the National Building Code of Canada and the various provincial building codes.

“The fire on the Remy project construction site, although devastating, should not take away from this innovative B.C. initiative, which has already set the stage for a pan-Canadian approach to mid-rise wood construction. The Canadian Wood Council, through its network of research and technical expertise, will continue to provide support to those involved in design and construction with respect to safe and effective building practices.”

- Michael Giroux, President of the Canadian Wood Council

“As with any building innovation, education of all stakeholders remains vital so that projects such as Remy can continue to foster advances in the design of wood construction.”

- Mary Tracey, Executive Director Wood *WORKS!* British Columbia

“The safety level of buildings such as the Remy project, once completed and equipped with the required protection systems under the building code would be equivalent to that of any similar building constructed with other materials.”

- Dr. George Hadjisophocleous, Industrial Research Chair in Fire-Safety Engineering, Carleton University

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