

Information Bulletin

Mountain Heights of Electrical Controls in Barrier-Free Paths of Travel

Mounting heights of electrical controls in barrier free paths of travel shall be in accordance with Manitoba Building Code Article 3.8.1.5., reprinted below:

3.8.1.5. Controls

1. *Except as required by Sentence 3.5.2.1.(3) regarding elevators, controls for the operation of building services or safety devices, including electrical switches, thermostats and intercom switches, that are intended to be operated by the occupant and are located in or adjacent to a barrier-free path of travel shall be accessible to a person in a wheelchair, operable with one hand, and mounted between 400 mm and 1200 mm above the floor.*

What is a barrier free path of travel? Simplified:

- **Corridors**
All main floor corridors and corridors that are accessible by an elevator are barrier-free.
- **Residential (incl. hotels)**
Barrier-free area stops at the suite door unless the suite is designated as barrier-free (see also note below).
- **Office Areas**
Barrier-free area generally stops at the reception desk except if there is a barrier-free washroom, then the washroom and the path to it is barrier-free.
- **Industrial**
Most industrial areas are not barrier-free except for the barrier-free designated washroom and the path to it.

At least one washroom in each suite of residential occupancy must have barrier-free access – i.e.: 860mm (2'10") door – therefore, electrical controls for that room (e.g.: light & fan switches, etc.) must be mounted at the specified barrier-free mounting height.

The “electrical switches” noted in the MBC Article includes light switches, fan controls, etc. The mounting heights apply only to controls that are intended to be operated by the occupant. If a thermostat is located in an F2 bldg. along the path of travel to the barrier-free washroom but is not intended to be used by all occupants of the building, it need not be at the specified barrier-free mounting height.

Note that according to the MBC Article, the maximum mounting height for controls in barrier-free areas is 1200 mm while the Standard for the Installation of Fire Alarm Systems, CAN/ULC-S524-06, requires fire alarm manual pull stations and silencing means for in-suite audible fire alarm signals to be mounted from 1200 mm to 1400 mm above the floor. In order to comply with both the above MBC Article and the referenced ULC Standard, they must be mounted at 1200 mm above the floor.

To confirm barrier-free paths of travel after the building permit has been issued, please coordinate with your district Commercial Building Inspector.

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