

Condominium Home Owners' Association

Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976

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Condo Smarts

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Dear Condo Smarts: We live in a duplex on the Sunshine Coast. Our neighbour had a small fire on their deck and the result was about \$8,000 damage to the building siding, the deck and patio doors. They contacted their insurance company who have advised they are not covered for this damage and my insurance company doesn't cover us. Neither of us realized we are in a functioning strata and did not retain an insurance policy for the buildings. We feel somewhat fortunate that the damage is only \$8,000 and my neighbour has agreed to pay for the cost, but we are asking that you write a column about duplexes and insurance to warn everyone to be aware of the type of building they are living in and buy insurance to fit. Marilyn Flagg

Dear Marilyn: There are thousands of duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in the province and it would surprise most owners to know that they are likely a strata. In most cases they are even a building type strata, showing the building on the strata plan. In a building type strata the exteriors are often common property and the buildings and fixtures built by the owner developer are part of

the common assets. The strata corporation, created by the registered strata plan, must maintain insurance on all perils specified in the Act and Regulations and liability insurance against liability for property damage and bodily injury. In addition, each owner is advised to maintain insurance for their condo unit that covers personal property, betterments not covered by the strata policy for their unit, and personal liability. Don't assume your personal insurance covers your property. You need a separate policy in the name of your strata corporation. For example, "the owners, strata plan ABC1234". A duplex works exactly the same as any other strata. You approve an annual budget, retain insurance, maintain common property, enforce bylaws and maintain records. The only strata exception to insurance is if the strata is bare land. Then the buildings are not shown on the strata plan and each owner insures their own building. If you don't know if your building is a strata, review your purchase documents or have a title search done on your unit. It will be indicated on the title if it is part of a strata plan.

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