

VANCOUVER FENCE BUILDERS

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# Permits & Regulations

Metro Vancouver fence bylaws, height limits, building permits, pool fencing codes, strata rules, and BC Building Code requirements for fencing

25 Expert Answers from Fence IQ

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## Can I install an electric gate on my residential property in Vancouver without a permit?

It depends on the type of electrical connection. **Low-voltage gate openers that plug into a standard outdoor outlet generally do not require an electrical permit, but hardwired gate systems that need a dedicated circuit from your electrical panel do require an electrical permit and inspection by Technical Safety BC.** The gate structure itself — if it meets standard residential height limits — typically does not require a building permit.

**Low-voltage systems are the simplest path.** Most residential automatic gate openers sold in Canada operate on low-voltage DC power (12V or 24V). A small transformer plugs into a standard weatherproof outdoor outlet (GFCI-protected), and low-voltage wiring runs from the transformer to the gate operator. Because the wiring between the transformer and the gate motor is low voltage, it falls outside the scope of work that requires an electrical installation permit under BC's Electrical Safety Regulation. This means a qualified gate installer can complete the entire job without involving an electrician or pulling an electrical permit — as long as a suitable outdoor outlet already exists near the gate location.

**Solar-powered gate openers eliminate electrical concerns entirely.** These systems use a solar panel to charge an onboard battery that powers the gate motor. No connection to your home's electrical system is needed at all, which means no electrical permit, no electrician, and no inspection. Solar gate openers work well in Metro Vancouver — modern panels generate sufficient charge even on overcast days, and the battery provides backup for extended cloudy periods. Solar kits add \$200-\$500 to the operator cost but save on electrical installation.

**Hardwired systems require permits and a licensed electrician.** If your gate operator requires a dedicated 120V or 240V circuit — common for heavier commercial-grade operators, heated driveways with integrated gate controls, or intercom systems with video — you must hire a licensed electrical contractor to run the circuit. This work requires an electrical installation permit, which in Vancouver is obtained through the City of Vancouver's Development, Buildings & Licensing department. After installation, Technical Safety BC must inspect and approve the work before the system is energized. Permit fees are typically \$100-\$200, and the electrician's work adds \$500-\$1,500 to the project depending on the distance from your panel to the gate.

**The gate structure itself usually does not need a building permit** in Vancouver or other Metro Vancouver municipalities, provided it meets the standard residential fence height limits (1.8 metres in rear and side yards, 1.2 metres in front yards in the City of Vancouver). A driveway gate that matches your existing fence height and is located on your property within setback requirements is treated the same as the fence itself for bylaw purposes. However, if your gate exceeds the maximum height — for example, a tall arched gate or a gate with decorative post caps that push the total height above 1.8 metres — you may need a development permit variance.

**Safety requirements apply regardless of permit status.** All automatic residential gates in Canada should comply with CSA C22.2 and UL 325 safety standards, which require safety sensors (photo-eyes) to detect obstructions and prevent the gate from closing on people, pets, or vehicles. Entrapment protection is a critical safety feature — an automatic gate can exert enough force to cause serious injury. Ensure your gate installer includes and properly positions safety sensors and that the operator has an auto-reverse function.

**Strata properties add another layer.** If you live in a townhouse, bare land strata, or any strata-titled property in Metro Vancouver, you'll need strata council approval before installing any gate — electric or manual — even on your own lot boundary. Many stratas have specific rules about gate styles, colours, and automation that must be followed. Get written approval before ordering materials or hiring a contractor.

Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with gate automation professionals who understand the permit requirements and safety standards for residential electric gates across Metro Vancouver.

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Q2

## Do I need a building permit to build a fence in the City of Surrey?

**No, a building permit is not required for standard residential fences in the City of Surrey.** However, your fence must comply with the height and material restrictions in Surrey's Zoning By-law 12000, and it must be located entirely on your property — not on City right-of-way, easement areas, or public land.

**Surrey's fence regulations are found in Zoning By-law 12000**, specifically under Part 4, Section E, Subsection 8 (General Provisions — Fencing). The key rules are straightforward: the maximum fence height is 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards, and 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards. These heights are measured from the grade at the base of the fence to the highest point of the fence, including any decorative elements, post caps, or lattice toppers. Barbed wire and razor wire are not permitted in residential zones.

**While no building permit is needed, you still can't build whatever you want.** The City of Surrey's bylaw enforcement team responds to complaints about non-compliant fences, and a fence that exceeds the maximum height, uses prohibited materials, or encroaches on city property can result in a notice of bylaw violation and a requirement to modify or remove the fence at your expense. The most common violations in Surrey are front-yard fences exceeding the 4-foot maximum (often built by homeowners unaware of the front-yard restriction) and fences built on city boulevard or utility easement areas.

**Corner lots and visibility triangles have additional restrictions** in Surrey. If your property is on a corner, fences near the intersection must not obstruct sight lines for drivers and pedestrians. Surrey's zoning bylaw defines

visibility triangles at intersections where fence height is further restricted — typically to 0.9 metres (3 feet) or less within the triangle area. This applies to both hard corners (street intersections) and driveway-to-street intersections. Building a tall privacy fence in a visibility triangle is a common mistake that triggers enforcement.

**Some fence-related work does require permits in Surrey.** Retaining walls over 1.2 metres (4 feet) in height require a building permit, and if a retaining wall supports a fence, the combined height of the wall and fence must comply with the maximum fence height limit — with the wall height counting toward the total. Electrical work for automatic gate operators requires an electrical permit if the system is hardwired (as opposed to plug-in low-voltage). Pool fences must meet BC Building Code requirements for height, gate hardware, and anti-climb features, and the pool itself requires a building permit that includes fence specifications.

**Development permits and design guidelines add another layer in certain Surrey neighbourhoods.** Some newer subdivisions and comprehensive development zones have design guidelines that specify fence styles, colours, and materials beyond what the base zoning bylaw requires. If your property is in a CD (Comprehensive Development) zone, check whether additional fence restrictions apply. You can look up your property's zoning designation through Surrey's online mapping tool at [cosmos.surrey.ca](https://cosmos.surrey.ca) or by calling 604-591-4011.

**Before you build, take these essential steps.** First, confirm your exact property boundaries — either from your survey certificate (included with your purchase documents) or by hiring a BC Land Surveyor (\$1,000-\$3,000 depending on complexity). Building a fence even slightly onto your neighbour's property or city land creates liability. Second, call BC One Call at 1-800-474-6886 (or submit a request online at [bc1c.ca](https://bc1c.ca)) for a free utility locate before digging any post holes — buried gas lines, electrical cables, water mains, and telecom lines are common in Surrey's residential areas and hitting one is both dangerous and expensive. Third, talk to your neighbours about the planned fence, especially if it will be on or near the shared property line — good communication prevents disputes.

Need help finding a fence contractor familiar with Surrey's bylaw requirements? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals who build fences across Surrey and Metro Vancouver every day.

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Q3

## What are the fence height restrictions in the City of Burnaby?

**In the City of Burnaby, the maximum fence height is 1.2 metres (approximately 4 feet) in front yards and 1.8 metres (approximately 6 feet) in rear and side yards.** These limits are set by Burnaby's Zoning Bylaw and apply to all residential zones, with some additional rules for specific situations like corner lots, retaining walls, and entrance structures.

**How Burnaby measures fence height matters.** The height of a fence is measured from the average grade within 900mm (approximately 3 feet) on both sides of the fence to the highest point of the fence. This measurement method is important because it means the grade on both sides of the fence is averaged — so if your yard is higher than your neighbour's, the fence height is calculated from the average of both ground levels, not just yours. This prevents homeowners on the high side of a slope from building a fence that appears reasonable from their side but towers over the neighbour's yard.

**Retaining walls and fences have combined height rules.** When a fence is built on top of a retaining wall along a property line, the calculation gets more specific — any portion of ground located beyond the retaining wall is not included in the calculation of average grade. This means a retaining wall with a fence on top can effectively exceed the standard height limits when viewed from the lower side. If you're planning a retaining wall and fence combination on a sloped property in Burnaby, consult with the City's planning department to confirm compliance before building.

**Entrance structures have their own limits.** Arbours, archways, gates, and similar structures that serve as an entrance to your property are permitted up to 2.6 metres (approximately 8.5 feet) in height and 1.8 metres (approximately 6 feet) in width. This exception allows for decorative arched garden gates and arbour-style entrance features that exceed the standard fence height — a nice touch for front yard curb appeal without requiring a variance.

**Some Burnaby zones have additional restrictions.** In R10 districts (a high-density residential zone), fences are prohibited in front yards entirely. Other zones may have specific restrictions based on the character of the neighbourhood. Burnaby's zoning bylaw is organized by zone, so the regulations for your specific property depend on its zoning designation. You can look up your property's zone through the City of Burnaby's online mapping system or by contacting the Planning Department at 604-294-7400.

**What happens if your fence exceeds the limits?** If you want a fence taller than the maximum permitted height — for example, an 8-foot privacy fence along a rear yard that backs onto a busy street — you'll need to apply to the Board of Variance for a relaxation of the zoning bylaw. The Board of Variance considers factors like the specific circumstances of your property, the impact on neighbouring properties, and whether the variance is minor. There's an application fee, and the process involves notifying affected neighbours and a public hearing. Not all variance requests are granted, so there's no guarantee.

**Practical implications for fence projects in Burnaby.** The 1.8-metre (6-foot) rear and side yard limit accommodates the most popular residential fence height — a 6-foot privacy fence built with standard 6-foot boards on 8-foot posts (with 2 feet buried below grade). If you want more privacy, consider planting hedges or trees along the fence line rather than trying to exceed the height limit. Lattice toppers, while attractive, count toward the total fence height — so a 6-foot solid fence with a 1-foot lattice topper would exceed the 1.8-metre limit and technically

require a variance.

**Before building, confirm the current regulations directly with the City of Burnaby.** Municipal bylaws are updated periodically, and zone-specific regulations may apply to your property that aren't captured in general summaries. The Building Department can be reached at 604-294-7130, and the Planning Department at 604-294-7400. A quick phone call before you build is far easier than dealing with a bylaw violation after the fence is up.

Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with fence contractors who build in Burnaby regularly and understand the local bylaw requirements. Get matched for free through the Vancouver Construction Network.

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## Does my fence contractor need to be licensed or registered in British Columbia?

**No, fence contractors in British Columbia are not required to hold a specific provincial licence or registration to build fences.** Unlike some trades such as electricians and plumbers that require certification, fencing is not a regulated trade in BC, and the Homeowner Protection Act — which requires licensing for residential builders — explicitly excludes fencing from its scope.

**The Homeowner Protection Act (HPA) is BC's main contractor licensing law,** administered by BC Housing. It requires anyone who builds new homes or performs substantial renovations to hold a residential builder licence. However, the Act's definition of covered work specifically excludes "landscaping, both hard and soft, including plants, fencing, detached patios, planters, gazebos and similar structures." This means fence installation, repair, and replacement are completely outside the HPA licensing requirement, and a fence contractor does not need a BC Housing residential builder licence for any fence work.

**However, "not licensed" doesn't mean "no protections exist."** There are several practical safeguards you should verify before hiring any fence contractor in Metro Vancouver. First, confirm they hold a valid municipal business licence for the city where the work will be done. Most Metro Vancouver municipalities require contractors to hold a business licence before performing work — operating without one can result in fines for the contractor and may complicate any future disputes. Second, ask for proof of commercial general liability insurance — a minimum of \$2 million is standard in BC. This protects you if the contractor damages your property, your neighbour's property, or injures someone during the project. Without it, you could be held financially responsible for accidents on your property.

**WorkSafeBC coverage is critically important.** Any fence contractor with employees must be registered with WorkSafeBC and maintain workers' compensation coverage. If an unregistered contractor's worker is injured on your property, you could face liability. You can verify a company's WorkSafeBC registration status through the WorkSafeBC online clearance letter system. Ask the contractor for their WorkSafeBC account number and check it yourself — this takes just a few minutes and is free.

**Certain fence-related work does require licensed tradespeople.** If your project includes electrical work for an automatic gate system that requires hardwiring (not a simple plug-in low-voltage operator), that electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician with certification from Technical Safety BC. Plumbing connections for outdoor taps near the fence, gas line work near fence post locations, and structural retaining walls over 4 feet that support a fence may require licensed professionals and permits.

**What to look for in a fence contractor instead of a licence.** Since there's no provincial licensing requirement, your due diligence is especially important. Ask for references from recent local projects and actually call them.

Request photos of completed work, particularly projects similar to yours. Check online reviews across multiple platforms. Confirm they've been operating in Metro Vancouver for at least a few years — new companies come and go, while established contractors have reputations to protect. Get a detailed written contract that specifies materials (species, grade, dimensions), post depth and concrete specifications, fence height and style, hardware, project timeline, payment schedule, warranty terms, and cleanup responsibilities.

**A written warranty is your best protection.** Reputable fence contractors in Metro Vancouver typically offer a 1-2 year workmanship warranty covering structural issues like leaning posts, sagging gates, and panel failures — separate from any manufacturer warranty on materials. Get the warranty terms in writing before work begins. A contractor who won't put their warranty in writing is a red flag.

Vancouver Fence Builders connects homeowners with experienced fence professionals across Metro Vancouver. While we're not a verification or vetting service, we recommend checking references, WorkSafeBC coverage, insurance, and past project photos before hiring any contractor.

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Q5

## What happens if I build a fence that doesn't comply with Vancouver's zoning bylaws?

**If your fence doesn't comply with Vancouver's zoning bylaws, the City can order you to modify or remove it — and if you don't comply, you can face fines and potentially have the City do the work at your expense.**

Enforcement is typically complaint-driven, meaning the City usually investigates when a neighbour or member of the public reports a violation rather than proactively inspecting every fence in the city.

**The most common fence bylaw violations in Vancouver** involve fences exceeding the maximum height (1.8 metres in rear and side yards, 1.2 metres in front yards), fences built on city property or right-of-way (boulevard strips, lane allowances, utility easements), fences that obstruct visibility at intersections on corner lots, and fences that don't meet pool enclosure requirements under the BC Building Code.

**The enforcement process typically follows a predictable path.** When the City receives a complaint about a non-compliant fence, a bylaw enforcement officer will inspect the site and measure the fence against the applicable regulations. If a violation is confirmed, the City issues a notice of bylaw violation to the property owner. This notice identifies the specific violation and gives you a deadline to bring the fence into compliance — usually 30-60 days, though this varies based on the severity of the violation and whether it poses a safety concern.

**If you don't comply with the notice, consequences escalate.** The City of Vancouver can impose fines for bylaw violations. Under BC's Local Government Act and the Vancouver Charter, the City can pursue enforcement through Provincial Court (summary conviction with fines) or through municipal ticketing and administrative penalties. Fines for zoning violations in Vancouver can range from \$250 to \$10,000 per offence, and continuing violations can result in daily fines until the issue is resolved. In extreme cases — or where a safety hazard exists — the City can enter the property and remove or modify the fence itself, then bill the property owner for the cost of the work plus administrative fees.

**Neighbour disputes are the most common trigger.** Many fence violations go unnoticed for years until a neighbour complains — often during a property dispute, renovation project, or sale. A fence that's been standing for 10 years without complaint can still be found in violation if someone reports it. There is no "grandfathering" provision for non-compliant fences in Vancouver's zoning bylaw — if it doesn't comply, it doesn't comply regardless of how long it's been there.

**If you've already built a non-compliant fence, you have options.** The simplest is to modify the fence to meet the bylaw — for example, reducing the height by removing a section of boards or a lattice topper. If the violation involves location (built on city property), you may need to relocate the fence onto your property, which is more disruptive and expensive. If you genuinely need a fence that exceeds the standard limits — for security, privacy from a busy street, or terrain reasons — you can apply to the Board of Variance for a relaxation of the bylaw. This involves an application fee, notification of affected neighbours, and a hearing. The Board considers whether the strict application of the bylaw would cause undue hardship and whether the variance would negatively impact neighbours.

**Prevention is far cheaper than correction.** Before building any fence in Vancouver, check the zoning bylaw for your specific zone — regulations can vary between zones, and some areas have design guidelines that add further requirements. Confirm your property boundaries with a survey or at minimum with your survey certificate. Keep the fence entirely on your property, set back a few inches from the property line to be safe. Verify that your fence height complies with the limits for your yard zone (front, side, or rear). If you're on a corner lot, pay special attention to visibility triangle requirements.

**Building with a professional fence contractor who knows Vancouver's bylaws is your best insurance against violations.** Experienced contractors build fences in the city every week and know the common pitfalls — they'll flag potential issues before construction, not after.

Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with fence contractors who understand Vancouver's zoning requirements inside and out.

## Do I need to call BC One Call before digging fence post holes in Metro Vancouver?

**Yes, absolutely — you must contact BC One Call (BC 1 Call) before digging fence post holes anywhere in Metro Vancouver.** The service is free, it's required by WorkSafeBC regulations for contractors, and it protects you from hitting buried gas lines, electrical cables, water mains, telecommunications lines, and other underground utilities that could cause serious injury, property damage, or service outages.

**BC One Call's phone number is 1-800-474-6886**, and you can also submit a locate request online at [bc1c.ca](http://bc1c.ca). The service is completely free for homeowners and contractors. When you submit a request, BC 1 Call notifies all member utility companies that have infrastructure in your area. Those companies then send locators to your property to mark the approximate location of their buried lines using colour-coded paint, flags, or stakes on the ground surface. You need to submit your request at least three business days before you plan to dig, so factor this into your project timeline.

**The colour codes used for utility markings follow a standard system across BC.** Red marks electric power lines. Yellow marks natural gas and oil lines. Orange marks telecommunications and cable TV lines. Blue marks water lines. Green marks sanitary sewer. Purple marks reclaimed water. White marks the proposed dig area (you or your contractor mark this). Understanding these colours helps you and your fence contractor plan post hole locations to avoid buried infrastructure.

**Metro Vancouver properties have more buried utilities than most people realize.** Natural gas service lines run from the street main to your gas metre, typically through the front or side yard. Electrical service may be underground in newer neighbourhoods (post-1980s) even if older areas use overhead power lines. Water and sewer laterals connect your home to the mains under the street. Telecommunications cables for internet and phone service are often buried just 12-18 inches below grade — well within the depth of a fence post hole. In some Metro Vancouver neighbourhoods, FortisBC district energy systems, Shaw and Telus fibre optic lines, and TransLink infrastructure add additional underground hazards.

**The consequences of hitting a buried utility are severe.** Striking a natural gas line can cause an explosion or gas leak requiring emergency evacuation. Cutting an electrical cable can cause electrocution — buried electrical lines carry enough voltage to kill. Even hitting a water main or telecom line, while not immediately life-threatening, creates expensive repairs. FortisBC and BC Hydro can bill you for repair costs if you damage their infrastructure without having obtained a locate first — these repairs can cost thousands of dollars. Your home insurance may not cover damage if you failed to call for a locate before digging.

**BC 1 Call does have limitations you should understand.** The service only marks utilities owned by member companies — it does not mark private lines on your property, such as irrigation systems, private electrical lines to outbuildings, septic tanks, or landscape lighting wiring. It also doesn't mark utilities owned by non-member entities, though most major utilities in Metro Vancouver are members. The locate markings show approximate locations (typically within 300mm or 1 foot of the actual line), so you should hand-dig carefully within 600mm (2 feet) of any marked line rather than using power augers or machinery.

**Your fence contractor should handle this as standard practice.** Professional fence contractors in Metro Vancouver call BC One Call as a routine part of every project. If a contractor tells you they don't bother with utility locates, or that they "know where the lines are" without getting an official locate, that's a serious red flag. WorkSafeBC regulations require employers to identify underground utilities before excavation, and a contractor who skips this step is cutting corners on safety.

**Timing your locate request properly prevents delays.** Submit your BC One Call request at least 3 business days before your planned dig date — 5 business days is better to account for any delays. Locate markings are valid for 30 days in BC, after which you need to request a new locate if work hasn't started. If your fence project spans several weeks (common for large perimeter fences), consider whether the initial markings will still be valid when work reaches all areas of the property.

Need help finding a fence contractor who follows proper safety procedures, including BC One Call utility locates? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with professionals across Metro Vancouver who do the job right.

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## What are the strata bylaws for building a fence at a townhouse complex in Coquitlam?

**If you live in a townhouse complex in Coquitlam, your strata corporation's bylaws will almost certainly require council approval before you build, replace, or modify any fence on your property — even fences within your own lot boundaries.** Strata bylaws override municipal regulations when they are more restrictive, so checking your strata's specific rules is the essential first step before planning any fence project.

Most Coquitlam townhouse stratas have bylaws that regulate fence height, material, colour, and style to maintain a uniform appearance throughout the complex. A common restriction is that all perimeter fences must match the original developer-installed style — often 6-foot pressure-treated or cedar board fences in a specific configuration. Some stratas only allow replacement with identical materials and colours, while others have updated their bylaws to permit modern options like vinyl or composite fencing. Your strata's registered bylaws are filed with the BC Land Title Office, and your strata manager or council should provide a copy on request.

**The approval process typically involves submitting a written request to your strata council** describing the proposed fence, including the material, height, colour, and design. Many stratas require a sketch or contractor quote. The council then reviews your request at their next meeting, which may take 2-6 weeks depending on meeting schedules. Some stratas require a 3/4 vote at a general meeting for any changes to common property, which includes shared boundary fences. Do not start work before receiving written approval — unauthorized fence installations can result in a requirement to remove the fence at your expense, plus potential fines under the strata's bylaw enforcement provisions.

**Beyond strata approval, your fence must also comply with the City of Coquitlam's zoning bylaw.** Coquitlam generally allows fences up to 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards and 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards without a permit. However, townhouse complexes often have site-specific development permits that may impose additional restrictions. If your townhouse backs onto a greenway, park, or public pathway, the city may have additional setback or height requirements.

**One critical distinction in strata fencing is the difference between limited common property (LCP) and common property.** LCP is common property that the strata has designated for the exclusive use of a specific unit — your patio or backyard area, for example. Fences on LCP are your responsibility to maintain, but modifications still require strata approval. Fences on general common property (shared boundaries between units, perimeter fences) are the strata corporation's responsibility, and individual owners typically cannot modify them without a resolution.

**For Coquitlam townhouse owners planning a fence project, the recommended approach is:** first, request a copy of your strata's current bylaws and any existing development permit conditions; second, identify whether your fence is on limited common property or common property; third, submit a formal alteration request to strata council with your proposed materials and design; and fourth, once approved, hire a contractor experienced with strata properties who understands the need to minimize disruption to neighbouring units and common areas.

Need help finding a fence contractor experienced with Coquitlam strata properties? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with qualified local professionals through the Vancouver Construction Network.

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Q8

## Do I need strata council approval to replace my fence in a Vancouver townhouse?

**Yes, you almost certainly need strata council approval before replacing a fence at a Vancouver townhouse, even if the fence is within your exclusive-use area.** Under the BC Strata Property Act, any alteration to common property or limited common property requires approval, and fences at townhouse complexes fall into one of these categories in virtually every strata plan.

The key is understanding how your strata plan classifies the area where your fence sits. **Limited common property (LCP)** is common property that your strata has assigned for your exclusive use — typically your backyard, patio, or side yard. Even though you use it exclusively, you do not own it outright. Any modification, including fence replacement, requires strata council approval. **Common property** includes shared boundary fences between units and perimeter fencing — these belong to the strata corporation, and replacing them typically requires a 3/4 vote at a general meeting or a council resolution, depending on your strata's bylaws.

**If you are replacing the fence with an identical style, material, and colour,** some strata councils treat this as routine maintenance rather than an alteration. In these cases, you may only need to notify council rather than seek formal approval. However, do not assume this is the case — get confirmation in writing from your strata manager or council president before starting work. If you want to change the fence style, material, height, or colour from the existing standard, expect a more formal review process.

**The approval process for most Vancouver townhouse stratas involves** submitting a written alteration request describing the proposed fence replacement, including the material (e.g., 6-foot Western Red Cedar privacy fence), colour or finish, and a contractor quote. Council reviews the request at their next scheduled meeting. If your strata's bylaws require a general meeting vote for common property alterations, the timeline extends to whenever the next annual or special general meeting is held. Budget 4-8 weeks minimum from submission to approval.

**Practical tips for a smooth approval process:** provide clear photos of the current fence condition showing why replacement is needed (rot, leaning, storm damage), include a professional quote from a licensed fence contractor, offer to use materials and a design that match the existing neighbourhood standard, and be prepared to share the contractor's WorkSafeBC coverage and liability insurance documentation. Strata councils are much more likely to approve requests that are well-documented and consistent with the complex's existing aesthetic.

**What happens if you replace without approval?** The strata can issue a bylaw contravention notice and fine you, and in serious cases, they can require you to remove the new fence and restore the original at your expense. The BC Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) handles strata disputes, and they consistently uphold strata authority over alterations to common and limited common property. It is simply not worth the risk — get written approval first.

**Beyond strata approval, your replacement fence must also comply with City of Vancouver bylaws** — maximum 1.8 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards and 1.2 metres (4 feet) in front yards. Most townhouse fence replacements fall well within these limits.

Looking for a fence contractor experienced with Vancouver strata properties? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with professionals who understand the approval process and strata requirements.

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Q9

## What are the setback requirements for fences near sidewalks in the City of Vancouver?

**In the City of Vancouver, fences in front yards are limited to 1.2 metres (4 feet) in height and must be set back from the property line according to the zoning district's front yard setback requirements.** The fence itself can typically be built at or near the front property line, but the height restriction is strictly enforced to maintain sight lines for pedestrians and drivers.

**The City of Vancouver's Zoning and Development Bylaw governs fence placement relative to streets, sidewalks, and property boundaries.** In most residential zones (RS, RT, RM), the front yard setback for buildings is typically 6 metres (20 feet), but fences are allowed within this setback area provided they do not exceed the 1.2-metre height limit. This means you can build a low fence right at the front property line adjacent to the sidewalk, but it cannot be taller than 4 feet. If your property has a boulevard (the grassy strip between the sidewalk and your property line), the fence must be on your side of the property line — not on the boulevard, which is city property.

**Side yard fences adjacent to sidewalks on corner lots have additional restrictions.** Corner lots in Vancouver are subject to sight triangle requirements at intersections, which typically require that no fence, hedge, or structure

within a triangular area measured from the intersection corner (usually 6 metres along each street frontage) exceeds 0.9 metres (3 feet) in height. This ensures drivers and pedestrians have clear sight lines at corners. The side yard fence on the street-facing side of a corner lot is generally limited to 1.2 metres (4 feet) within the required side yard setback, though it can transition to the full 1.8-metre (6-foot) height where it moves beyond the front yard depth.

**For properties that border lanes (rear lanes are common in Vancouver neighbourhoods like Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant, and Grandview-Woodland),** rear fences can be up to 1.8 metres (6 feet) and are typically built at or near the property line adjacent to the lane. There is generally no additional setback required from lanes, but the fence must not encroach onto city lane property.

**Retaining wall and fence combinations near sidewalks require special attention.** If your property is above or below sidewalk grade — common in hilly areas like Queen Elizabeth, Cambie, and parts of the West Side — the combined height of the retaining wall and fence measured from the sidewalk side determines whether you need a permit. In general, if the total height from the lower grade exceeds 1.2 metres in the front yard, a building permit and possibly a development permit are required.

**Before building any fence near a sidewalk in Vancouver, confirm your exact property line.** Many homeowners assume the sidewalk edge is the property line, but in Vancouver the city right-of-way often extends 30-60 cm beyond the back of the sidewalk. Building on city property — even a few centimetres over the line — can result in a removal order. A property survey by a licensed BC Land Surveyor (\$1,000-\$3,000) eliminates this risk, or you can check your property's legal survey plan through the BC Land Title Office.

**Practical recommendations:** if you want a fence along a sidewalk frontage, consider a 4-foot cedar picket fence or ornamental aluminum fence that meets the height restriction while adding curb appeal. For added privacy, pair the low fence with strategic plantings behind it. Always confirm current bylaw requirements with the City of Vancouver's planning department before construction, as zoning regulations are periodically updated.

Need help finding a fence contractor familiar with City of Vancouver setback requirements? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced local professionals for a free estimate.

## How do corner lot fence height restrictions work in Metro Vancouver municipalities?

**Corner lots across Metro Vancouver have additional fence height restrictions beyond standard residential limits, primarily to maintain safe sight lines at intersections for both drivers and pedestrians.** These restrictions create what is commonly called a "sight triangle" or "vision clearance area" at the corner of the lot where the two streets meet, and they apply to fences, hedges, walls, and any other visual obstructions.

**The sight triangle is typically measured from the point where the two property lines meet at the street corner,** extending a set distance along each street frontage. Within this triangular area, nothing can exceed a specified height — usually 0.9 metres (3 feet) in Vancouver and most Metro Vancouver municipalities. This ensures that drivers approaching the intersection can see pedestrians and oncoming vehicles. The exact dimensions of the sight triangle vary by municipality, but 6 metres (20 feet) along each frontage from the corner is a common standard.

**In the City of Vancouver,** fences on the street-facing side yard of a corner lot are generally limited to 1.2 metres (4 feet) within the required side yard setback along the flanking street. This is the same as front yard limits because the side yard faces a street. Once the fence passes beyond the front building setback line (roughly where the house starts), it can transition to the standard 1.8-metre (6-foot) height for rear and interior side yards. The transition point must be clean and clearly behind the sight triangle area.

**Burnaby and Surrey follow similar principles** but with their own specific bylaw language. Burnaby's zoning bylaw restricts fences in the sight triangle to a maximum of 1.0 metre (3.3 feet) and measures the triangle 6 metres along each property line from the corner. Surrey also enforces sight triangle restrictions, and additionally, their bylaw specifically addresses fences on corner lots adjacent to driveways — a fence within 1.5 metres of a driveway crossing a sidewalk cannot exceed 1.0 metre in height to maintain driver visibility when backing out.

**Richmond, Coquitlam, and other Metro Vancouver municipalities** have comparable regulations. Richmond's agricultural areas may have different standards. Coquitlam has been updating its zoning bylaws, so confirm current requirements directly with their planning department. The Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody) each have their own bylaws despite geographic proximity.

**The practical challenge for corner lot owners is maximizing privacy while meeting sight triangle requirements.** Several design strategies work well. You can build a full 6-foot privacy fence along the rear and interior side of your property, transitioning to a 4-foot fence or ornamental style along the street-facing side. Within the sight triangle itself, consider a low decorative fence paired with privacy landscaping set back from the corner. Board-on-board (shadowbox) fences at the maximum allowed height provide partial screening while maintaining

some sight transparency.

**A common mistake is building a full-height fence on a corner lot without accounting for the sight triangle.**

Municipal bylaw enforcement officers regularly inspect corner lot fences, and non-compliant fences can result in a notice to reduce the height or remove the fence entirely. In some municipalities, a neighbour or driver complaint is enough to trigger an inspection. The cost of rebuilding a non-compliant section far exceeds the cost of getting it right the first time.

**Before building on a corner lot, request the specific sight triangle dimensions from your municipality's planning department** and get a property survey to confirm exactly where your property lines are. Corner lot property lines can be irregular, and the city right-of-way may extend further onto your lot than expected. A qualified fence contractor experienced with corner lot installations in your specific municipality will know these requirements and design accordingly.

Need help with a corner lot fence project? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with contractors who understand local sight triangle requirements across Metro Vancouver.

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**Q11**

**What's the process for getting a fence building permit in the City of Vancouver?**

**Most standard residential fences in the City of Vancouver do not require a building permit, provided they comply with the height limits in the Zoning and Development By-law — 1.2 metres (4 feet) in front yards and 1.8 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards.** However, there are several situations where a permit is required, and understanding the process through the City of Vancouver's Development, Buildings & Licensing department will save you time and potential enforcement headaches.

**You DO need a building permit for a fence in Vancouver when:** the fence exceeds the maximum height allowed by zoning (over 1.2m in front yards or over 1.8m in rear/side yards); the fence is combined with a retaining wall and the total structure height exceeds the applicable maximum; the fence includes an electrically operated gate with hardwired motor (requires both a building permit and an electrical permit — the electrical work must be inspected by Technical Safety BC); the fence is a required pool enclosure (must meet BC Building Code requirements for height, gate hardware, and climb-resistance); or the project is on public or strata common property.

**The permit application process** through the City of Vancouver's Development, Buildings & Licensing department works as follows:

**Step 1 — Pre-application enquiry.** Before submitting a formal application, you can contact the City's Development and Building Services Centre at 515 West 10th Avenue to discuss your project. Staff can confirm whether a permit is required for your specific situation, identify any zoning issues, and explain what drawings and documentation you'll need. You can also call 3-1-1 for general bylaw questions. This step is free and highly recommended — it can save you from submitting an incomplete application.

**Step 2 — Prepare your application.** If a permit is required, you'll need to submit a site plan (survey certificate or plot plan showing your property boundaries, existing structures, and the proposed fence location with dimensions and setbacks), fence drawings showing height, materials, and construction details, and the completed building permit application form. For electrically operated gates, you'll also need electrical plans. The City of Vancouver accepts applications through its online services portal or in person at the Development and Building Services Centre.

**Step 3 — Submit and pay fees.** Building permit fees in the City of Vancouver are based on the estimated construction value of the project. For a fence, the minimum permit fee is approximately \$152 (as of 2025-2026, subject to change). More complex projects with higher construction values will have proportionally higher fees. The City's fee schedule is published on [vancouver.ca](http://vancouver.ca) under "Building permit fees."

**Step 4 — Review and approval.** The City reviews your application for compliance with the Zoning and Development By-law, the Vancouver Building By-law (which incorporates the BC Building Code), and any applicable development permit conditions or heritage guidelines. Simple fence permits are typically processed within 2 to 4 weeks. More complex applications — especially those requiring a development permit variance for height or location — can take 8 to 16 weeks or longer.

**Step 5 — Inspection.** Once your permit is approved and the fence is built, you'll need to request an inspection. The City inspector verifies that the fence was built according to the approved plans and meets code requirements. For pool fences, inspection is particularly thorough — gate hardware, height, climb-resistance, and gap spacing are all checked.

**Development permits** are a separate process from building permits and may be required in certain zones or situations. If your fence project is part of a larger development, or if you need a variance from standard zoning regulations (for example, you want a 7-foot fence in a zone that allows 6 feet), a development permit application is required. Development permits involve a more extensive review and may include notification of neighbours. This process takes significantly longer — typically 3 to 6 months — and costs more.

**Even when no permit is required,** your fence must still comply with the Zoning and Development By-law. If a bylaw enforcement officer or a neighbour complaint reveals that your fence exceeds height limits or violates setback requirements, the City can issue a notice requiring you to bring the fence into compliance — which may

mean cutting it down or removing it entirely.

**Before any fence installation** — permitted or not — call **BC One Call (1-800-474-6886)** for a free utility locate. This is legally required before digging in BC and identifies buried gas lines, electrical cables, water mains, and telecommunications infrastructure on your property. Allow 5 to 7 business days for the locate to be completed before digging post holes.

The permit process is straightforward for most fence projects. If you need help navigating it, or if you want to connect with contractors who handle the permit process as part of their service, Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced fence professionals across the City of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver.

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**Q12**

## **What's the maximum fence height allowed in the City of Richmond BC?**

**The City of Richmond generally allows a maximum fence height of 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards, and 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards for residential properties.** These limits are established under Richmond's Zoning Bylaw No. 8500, which governs fence and screening regulations across all residential zones in the city.

Richmond's fence height rules are measured from the **finished grade** on the higher side of the fence. This is an important detail because Richmond is famously flat — much of the city sits at or near sea level on Lulu Island in the Fraser River delta — so grade differences between neighbouring properties are usually minimal. However, where fill has been added or where properties have been landscaped to different levels, the measurement from higher grade can affect your allowable height. If your property sits 30cm higher than your neighbour's, your 1.83-metre fence measured from your side would appear over 2 metres tall from their side, but it's still compliant because height is measured from the higher grade.

**Front yard fences in Richmond** are limited to 1.22 metres (4 feet), and this applies to any fence or screening structure within the front yard setback area. Corner lots in Richmond have additional restrictions — fences near intersections and driveways must maintain **sight triangle clearances** to ensure drivers can see pedestrians and other vehicles. Richmond's Engineering Department can provide specific sight triangle dimensions for your particular corner lot, but generally fences within 6 metres of an intersection must be low enough to maintain clear sight lines, which effectively means 0.9 metres (3 feet) or lower in many cases.

**Richmond has specific rules for the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)**, which covers a significant portion of the city's eastern areas. Properties within the ALR may have different fencing requirements depending on whether the

land is actively farmed. Agricultural fencing for livestock containment can exceed standard residential height limits, but residential-style privacy fences on ALR land are still subject to the standard maximums. If your property is in or near the ALR, confirm the applicable rules with Richmond's Planning Department before building.

**Fences exceeding the maximum height** require a Development Variance Permit (DVP) from the City of Richmond. The DVP process involves an application to the Planning Department, notification of adjacent property owners, and a decision by City Council. The process typically takes 8 to 12 weeks and costs several hundred dollars in application fees. Approval is not guaranteed — the city considers factors including the impact on neighbouring properties, the reason for the height increase, and neighbourhood character. In practice, DVPs for modest height increases (an extra 30 to 60cm for a rear yard privacy fence) are sometimes granted, while significant overheight requests are more difficult to justify.

**Retaining wall and fence combinations** in Richmond are measured as the total combined height from the lower grade. If you have a 60cm retaining wall with a 1.83-metre fence on top, the total height of 2.43 metres from the lower side may trigger the need for a building permit or DVP, even though the fence portion alone is within the standard limit. This is a common issue on properties near ditches and drainage channels in Richmond's agricultural-residential transition zones.

**Strata properties in Richmond** — and there are many, particularly in the newer developments along the Canada Line corridor, in Steveston, and in the City Centre area — must comply with both municipal bylaws and strata bylaws. Strata bylaws often impose stricter requirements than the city, including specific materials, colours, and styles. Always get written strata council approval before installing or replacing a fence on strata property in Richmond.

Before starting any fence project in Richmond, you can contact the City of Richmond's Building Approvals Department at 604-276-4000 or visit the city's website to confirm current bylaw requirements for your specific zone. Bylaws are updated periodically, and the specific regulations for your property depend on its zoning designation. If you need help finding a fence contractor familiar with Richmond's regulations, Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced local professionals for free.

## Do I need a permit to replace an existing fence in the same location in Vancouver?

**In most cases, no — replacing an existing fence in the same location with a new fence of the same or lesser height does not require a building permit in the City of Vancouver.** This is considered routine maintenance or replacement, not new construction, and falls within the scope of work exempt from permitting under Vancouver's Building Bylaw, provided the new fence complies with current zoning regulations.

However, there are several important conditions that must be met for the permit exemption to apply. The replacement fence must not exceed the **maximum allowable height** for its location — 1.8 metres (approximately 6 feet) in rear and side yards, and 1.2 metres (approximately 4 feet) in front yards. If your old fence was built decades ago when different height rules applied, or if it was built overheight without approval, you cannot simply replace it at the same non-compliant height. The replacement must conform to **current bylaws**, not the bylaws that existed when the original fence was built.

The replacement fence must also be in **substantially the same location** as the original. If you're shifting the fence line — even by a foot or two — you're effectively building a new fence in a new location, which may raise property line and setback questions. If you're replacing a fence and want to move it, get a property line survey first to ensure the new location is entirely on your property. A BC Land Surveyor can establish the boundary for \$500 to \$2,000 depending on the complexity of your lot.

**A building permit IS required** for replacement fences in several situations. If the new fence will be **taller than the allowable maximum** (even if the old one was that height), you'll need a Development Variance Permit. If the replacement involves a **retaining wall and fence combination** where the total height exceeds limits, a building permit may be required. If you're adding an **automatic gate with hardwired electrical components**, you'll need an electrical permit and inspection by Technical Safety BC. And if the fence is part of a **pool enclosure**, it must meet BC Building Code requirements for pool barriers — self-closing and self-latching gates, minimum height, climb-resistance — and an inspection may be required to confirm compliance.

**Strata properties** in Vancouver require strata council approval before any fence replacement, even if no city permit is needed. Many strata developments have specific requirements for fence materials, colours, and styles to maintain neighbourhood uniformity. Replacing a cedar fence with a vinyl fence, or changing from natural wood to painted wood, may violate strata bylaws even though the city doesn't care. Get written approval from your strata council before ordering materials or hiring a contractor.

**Practically speaking**, even though a permit isn't required for most straightforward replacements, there are still steps you should take before starting work. **Call BC One Call (1-800-474-6886)** for a free utility locate —

underground gas, electrical, water, and telecommunications lines must be identified before any post hole digging, even if you're putting posts in the same spots as the old ones. Old post holes may have shifted, or new utilities may have been installed since the original fence was built. **Talk to your neighbour** before removing a shared boundary fence — under the BC Property Law Act, Part 5, both property owners share responsibility for fences on the common boundary, and removing a fence without notice can create disputes. If your neighbour has attached anything to their side of the fence (plants, trellises, lights), give them time to remove those items before demolition.

**Cost-wise**, replacing an existing fence is often slightly less expensive than a brand-new installation because the post hole locations are already established. If the old concrete footings are in good condition and properly positioned, a contractor may be able to set new posts into the existing holes with fresh concrete rather than digging entirely new ones — saving \$30 to \$80 per post in digging and concrete costs. However, if the old posts rotted because they lacked gravel drainage beds (extremely common in older Metro Vancouver fences), insist that the contractor properly excavate the old footings and install gravel drainage below the new posts to prevent the same problem.

Need help finding a fence contractor for your replacement project? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals across Metro Vancouver for free estimates.

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Q14

## What are the rules for building a fence near a creek or waterway in Metro Vancouver?

**Building a fence near a creek, stream, river, or any watercourse in Metro Vancouver is subject to strict environmental regulations at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels — and in many cases you will need a permit, a development permit, or environmental review before any work can begin.** These rules exist to protect riparian habitat (the vegetation and ecosystem along waterways) and fish-bearing streams, which are abundant throughout Metro Vancouver.

The most significant regulation is the **Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR)** under BC's Riparian Areas Protection Act. This provincial regulation requires all municipalities in Metro Vancouver to protect riparian areas adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Under RAPR, a **Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)** must conduct a Riparian Areas Assessment before any development — including fence construction — within a **Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA)**. The SPEA is a buffer zone that typically extends **15 to 30 metres** from the top of bank of a fish-bearing stream, though the exact width is determined by the QEP assessment based on site-specific conditions. A QEP assessment costs \$2,000 to \$5,000 or more, depending on

the complexity of the site.

**Each Metro Vancouver municipality implements riparian protection through its own bylaws**, and the specific rules vary. The **City of Vancouver** has relatively few open watercourses left (most are piped underground), but properties near Still Creek in the Renfrew-Collingwood area, Musqueam Creek, and other remaining open waterways are subject to riparian protection. **Burnaby** has more extensive watercourse networks including Byrne Creek, Stoney Creek, and several tributaries flowing into Burnaby Lake and Burrard Inlet. **Surrey** has the most extensive watercourse network in Metro Vancouver, with hundreds of fish-bearing streams regulated under its Streamside Protection Bylaw. **Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody** (the Tri-Cities) have significant watercourse networks draining into the Coquitlam and Pitt Rivers. **North Vancouver** (both City and District) has numerous mountain-fed creeks flowing to Burrard Inlet.

**At the federal level**, the federal Fisheries Act protects fish habitat in all of Canada. Any work that could harmfully alter, disrupt, or destroy fish habitat — including clearing vegetation along a fish-bearing stream to install a fence — may require authorization from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Violations of the Fisheries Act carry serious penalties, including fines up to \$100,000 for individuals. This is not an academic concern — DFO actively investigates riparian disturbances in Metro Vancouver, and neighbours and environmental groups frequently report unauthorized work near streams.

**What this means practically for your fence project:** If your property borders or is near a creek, stream, ditch, or wetland, contact your municipal planning or environmental department **before** doing anything. They will tell you whether your property is within a SPEA or riparian setback area, whether a QEP assessment is required, and what permits you need. Do not assume that a small, seasonal, or apparently dry watercourse is unregulated — many "ditches" in Metro Vancouver are classified as fish-bearing streams or are connected to fish-bearing waters downstream.

**If fence construction is permitted within the riparian area**, expect conditions such as: no removal of existing vegetation (the fence must be installed around trees and shrubs, not through a cleared path), no use of concrete footings within the SPEA (driven posts or screw-pile anchors may be required instead), no storage of materials within the setback area, timing restrictions to avoid sensitive fish spawning periods (typically October through March for salmon), and erosion and sediment control measures during construction.

**Fence types that are generally more compatible with riparian areas** include open designs like split-rail, post-and-wire, or widely spaced pickets that allow wildlife passage and don't create barriers to natural water flow during flooding events. Solid privacy fences are often problematic near waterways because they can redirect flood flows, trap debris, and block wildlife corridors. Some municipalities specifically prohibit solid fences within riparian setbacks.

**The cost implications are significant.** Between the QEP assessment (\$2,000 to \$5,000), the development permit (\$500 to \$2,000), potential design modifications, and construction restrictions, building a fence near a waterway in Metro Vancouver can cost two to three times more than the same fence on an unconstrained property. But the penalties for unauthorized work — municipal fines, DFO prosecution, and mandatory restoration at your expense — are far more costly. Always get professional guidance before building near any waterway.

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Q15

## Can the city force me to take down a fence I built without a permit in BC?

**Yes, a municipality in BC can absolutely force you to remove a fence that was built without a required permit or that violates municipal bylaws — and they can issue fines, daily penalties, and ultimately obtain a court order compelling removal at your expense.** This is not a theoretical risk; bylaw enforcement actions for non-compliant fences happen regularly across Metro Vancouver, often triggered by neighbour complaints.

The enforcement process typically follows a **graduated approach**. When a municipality receives a complaint or a bylaw officer identifies a non-compliant fence during a routine inspection or drive-by, the first step is usually a **bylaw infraction notice** or letter from the building or bylaw enforcement department. This notice identifies the violation — typically that the fence exceeds the maximum allowable height, was built without a required permit, encroaches on a setback, or violates some other bylaw provision — and gives you a deadline to bring the fence into compliance or remove it. Deadlines typically range from 14 to 60 days depending on the municipality and the severity of the violation.

If you don't comply with the initial notice, the municipality can escalate. **Municipal tickets** (bylaw tickets) typically range from \$100 to \$500 per offence, and some municipalities can issue tickets on a **per-day basis** for ongoing violations — meaning a \$250 daily fine can accumulate rapidly. The City of Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, and other Metro Vancouver municipalities all have the authority to issue these tickets under their respective bylaw enforcement frameworks.

If tickets don't produce compliance, the municipality can pursue **a court order** through BC Provincial Court or Supreme Court requiring you to remove the fence. Under BC's Community Charter (for municipalities) and the Local Government Act (for regional districts), local governments have broad powers to enforce their bylaws through the courts. A court order for fence removal is legally binding, and failure to comply constitutes contempt of court — a serious legal matter. The municipality can also apply to the court for authorization to enter your property and remove the fence themselves, with all costs charged back to you.

**The most common scenarios that trigger enforcement** in Metro Vancouver include fences that significantly exceed height limits (a 2.4-metre fence where 1.8 metres is the maximum is very visible and frequently reported by neighbours), front yard fences that obstruct sight lines at intersections or driveways (a safety concern that municipalities take seriously), fences built within required setbacks from property lines or streets, fences that block access to registered easements or rights-of-way, and fences that violate the specific design requirements of a development permit.

**Neighbour complaints are the primary trigger** for fence bylaw enforcement. Municipalities generally do not proactively patrol for non-compliant fences — they respond to complaints. This means a fence that technically violates a bylaw might stand for years without issue if neighbours don't object. But it also means that any change in your relationship with a neighbour, a new neighbour moving in, or even an unrelated dispute can suddenly result in a complaint about a fence that's been standing for a decade.

**Your options if you receive an enforcement notice** include bringing the fence into compliance by reducing its height, relocating it, or modifying it to meet bylaw requirements. You can apply for a **Development Variance Permit (DVP)** after the fact if you believe there are grounds for the municipality to allow the non-compliant fence to remain. A DVP application involves fees, neighbour notification, and a decision by Council — and there is no guarantee of approval, especially if the neighbours who complained oppose it. You can also appeal bylaw tickets through the municipal adjudication process.

**The practical reality** is that it's always cheaper and less stressful to build a compliant fence in the first place. Checking with your municipal building or planning department before construction takes a phone call or a quick visit and costs nothing. If your project requires a permit, the fees in Metro Vancouver typically range from \$100 to \$500 — a small fraction of the cost of building a fence, tearing it down under enforcement, and rebuilding it to code. And if a neighbour dispute is the underlying issue, a non-compliant fence will only escalate the conflict.

If you're planning a fence that might be close to height limits or that has unusual circumstances (corner lot, retaining wall combination, near a watercourse), get professional guidance upfront. Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with contractors who understand Metro Vancouver municipal requirements and can help you design a compliant fence that meets your needs.

## What are the requirements for fencing around construction sites in Vancouver?

**Construction site fencing in Vancouver is mandatory under the City of Vancouver's Building Bylaw and WorkSafeBC's Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, and the requirements are significantly more stringent than residential fencing — both in terms of height, structural integrity, and duration of installation.** If you're a homeowner undertaking a major renovation or new build, or if a construction project is happening near your property, understanding these requirements is important.

Under the **City of Vancouver's Building Bylaw**, any active construction site that has been issued a building permit must be enclosed with temporary fencing to protect the public from hazards. The standard requirement is a **minimum 1.83-metre (6-foot) tall** solid or semi-solid hoarding fence around the construction perimeter, installed before demolition or construction begins and maintained until the project reaches a stage where it no longer poses a hazard to the public. For sites adjacent to public sidewalks and streets, the city typically requires **solid plywood hoarding** (not just chain-link) to prevent debris, dust, and materials from reaching pedestrians and traffic. The hoarding must be structurally sound enough to withstand wind loads and must not encroach onto city property without a **hoarding permit** from the City of Vancouver's Engineering Department.

**WorkSafeBC's regulations** add another layer of requirements. Under Part 20 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, construction sites must be secured to prevent unauthorized entry, protect workers, and protect the public. **WorkSafeBC requires** that excavations deeper than 1.2 metres be fenced or barricaded, that scaffolding and elevated work areas be secured against unauthorized access, and that the site perimeter be secured during non-working hours. For residential construction, this often means chain-link fencing with privacy screening around the entire site, locked gates during off-hours, and warning signage at all entry points.

**For homeowners undertaking major renovations** — such as additions, tear-downs and rebuilds, or extensive structural work — the contractor is responsible for installing and maintaining construction site fencing. However, as the property owner, you are ultimately responsible for ensuring your site complies with municipal bylaws and WorkSafeBC requirements. Make sure your contractor's quote includes the cost of temporary fencing, hoarding, and any required permits. Construction hoarding costs \$15 to \$40 per linear foot to install and typically \$200 to \$500 per month to rent if using prefabricated panel systems.

**Hoarding permits** are required in Vancouver when temporary construction fencing or hoarding extends onto city property — typically when the construction site is directly adjacent to a sidewalk, street, or lane and the hoarding needs to encroach beyond the property line to provide adequate protection. The City of Vancouver's Engineering Department issues these permits, and fees depend on the amount of public space occupied and the duration. Expect to pay \$500 to \$2,000 or more for a hoarding permit on a busy street, with monthly renewal fees. The permit

application must include a hoarding plan showing dimensions, pedestrian detour routing (if the sidewalk is blocked), lighting, signage, and structural details.

**Chain-link fencing with privacy screening** is the most common construction site fencing solution in Metro Vancouver. Temporary chain-link panels (typically 1.83 to 2.44 metres tall) are held upright by weighted bases and connected with clamps. Green or black privacy screening fabric is attached to the chain-link to control dust, debris, and visual impact. This system is available from fencing companies on a rental basis — typically \$8 to \$15 per panel per month — and can be installed and removed quickly as the project progresses.

**Duration matters.** Construction site fencing must remain in place for the entire duration of the project. In Vancouver's current construction market, residential rebuilds and major renovations can take 12 to 24 months, meaning temporary fencing costs can add up to \$3,000 to \$8,000 or more over the life of the project. This is a line item that many homeowners overlook when budgeting for major construction.

**Neighbour considerations** are important during construction. The City of Vancouver requires construction hoarding to be maintained in good condition — damaged panels must be repaired promptly, graffiti should be removed, and the hoarding must remain structurally stable. If your construction site fencing is damaging a neighbour's property, blocking their access, or creating drainage issues, you're responsible for resolving those problems. Good communication with neighbours before construction begins — including sharing your contractor's contact information and the expected project timeline — goes a long way toward preventing complaints.

**After construction is complete**, the temporary fencing must be removed and any damage to municipal property (sidewalks, boulevards, street trees) must be repaired at the owner's expense. This is typically handled by the general contractor as part of project closeout. If you're planning a permanent residential fence after construction, coordinate the timing with your contractor — it's more efficient to install permanent fencing as the final step of the construction project than to remove temporary fencing and then bring in a fence contractor separately.

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Q17

## What are the rules about fence height when it blocks a neighbour's view in West Vancouver?

**The District of West Vancouver has some of the most view-sensitive zoning regulations in Metro Vancouver, and fence height restrictions are enforced more aggressively here than in most other municipalities — particularly on properties with significant view corridors toward the ocean, mountains, or city skyline.** West Vancouver's Zoning Bylaw establishes standard fence height limits, but the district's unique topography and premium view properties create additional layers of regulation and neighbour sensitivity around

anything that might obstruct views.

The **standard fence height limits** in West Vancouver are similar to other Metro Vancouver municipalities: generally **1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards** and **1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards** in most residential zones. However, West Vancouver's residential zones span from waterfront properties at sea level to steep hillside lots at elevations of 300 metres or more along the mountainside. On these hillside properties, even a bylaw-compliant 1.83-metre fence can block a downhill neighbour's view if the uphill lot sits significantly higher. The fence itself might be only 6 feet tall, but when it sits on ground that is already 3 to 5 metres above the neighbouring property, the effective visual barrier can be substantial.

**West Vancouver's approach to view protection** goes beyond simple height limits. The district has historically been one of the most view-conscious municipalities in BC, and several mechanisms address the impact of structures — including fences — on neighbours' views. **Development Permit Areas** in West Vancouver often include design guidelines that address visual impact, and any fence that requires a variance or is part of a larger development application will be evaluated for its view impact. The district also has a strong culture of neighbour consultation, and fence projects that affect views tend to generate significant community pushback.

**The "spite fence" problem** is particularly acute in West Vancouver because property values are among the highest in Canada, and views are a significant component of that value. A \$3 million view home that loses its ocean or downtown view due to a neighbour's fence or landscaping can lose hundreds of thousands in value. While BC does not have a specific "spite fence" statute like some US jurisdictions, the courts and the CRT have addressed situations where fences or structures were built primarily to block a neighbour's view or cause annoyance. Under the general principles of nuisance law, a fence built with the primary purpose of obstructing a view — rather than for any legitimate privacy or boundary purpose — can potentially be challenged.

**Trees and vegetation** often play a role in West Vancouver view disputes alongside fences. While the District of West Vancouver has a **Tree Bylaw** that regulates tree removal (and can require permits to remove view-blocking trees), there is no equivalent "view bylaw" that gives you a legal right to an unobstructed view over your neighbour's property. Your neighbour is generally entitled to build a bylaw-compliant fence and grow trees on their property, even if it affects your view. The exception is if the fence or vegetation exceeds bylaw limits or was established primarily as a nuisance.

**Practical options if a neighbour's fence affects your view** in West Vancouver include: talking directly to your neighbour about the impact and exploring compromises such as a lower fence, a fence with spacing or see-through elements, or strategic placement that provides privacy without blocking the most significant view corridor. If the fence exceeds the legal height limit, file a complaint with the District of West Vancouver's bylaw enforcement department — they will measure the fence and issue a compliance order if it's overheight. If the fence is within legal limits but you believe it was built primarily to obstruct your view, consult a BC property lawyer about whether a

nuisance claim might apply. You can also file a dispute with the **BC Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT)** — the \$75 application fee is far more affordable than court proceedings, and the CRT handles neighbour disputes including fence-related conflicts.

**Design solutions for view-sensitive areas** in West Vancouver include using **glass or cable rail fencing** instead of solid wood or vinyl — glass panels and horizontal cable rails provide boundary definition and safety (especially on elevated decks and hillsides) without obstructing views. Glass panel fencing costs \$150 to \$300 per linear foot in Metro Vancouver, which is premium pricing but appropriate for West Vancouver's high-value properties. **Low, open fences** such as 3 to 4-foot ornamental aluminum or steel picket fences provide boundary definition without creating visual barriers. **Stepped fencing** on sloped lots, where the fence follows the grade in short sections, keeps each section within height limits while avoiding the wall-like effect of a single tall fence running up a slope.

**Before building any fence in West Vancouver**, contact the District of West Vancouver's Planning Department at 604-925-7153 to confirm the specific height limits and any additional requirements for your zone and lot. West Vancouver's residential zones have varying regulations, and hillside properties may have additional restrictions related to geotechnical setbacks and slope stability that affect where fence posts can be placed. If you need a fence contractor who understands West Vancouver's unique requirements, Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals familiar with the district's regulations and the particular challenges of hillside and view-sensitive installations.

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## Q18

### What are the rules about building a fence near a fire hydrant in Vancouver?

**You must maintain a minimum clear space around any fire hydrant adjacent to your property, and building a fence that obstructs fire department access to a hydrant is a bylaw violation that can result in a removal order and fines.** In the City of Vancouver and across Metro Vancouver municipalities, fire hydrant access is protected by both municipal bylaws and the BC Fire Code, and these requirements override any private fencing plans.

The City of Vancouver requires a **minimum 3-foot (approximately 1-metre) unobstructed clearance around the entire circumference of a fire hydrant.** This clearance must be maintained at all times and applies to fences, hedges, planters, garden beds, parked vehicles, bicycles, signage, and any other obstruction. The clearance zone ensures that firefighters can quickly connect hoses to both hydrant outlets and operate the control valve during an emergency — seconds matter in fire response, and any obstruction that delays hydrant access puts lives and property at risk.

**From a practical fencing standpoint**, if a fire hydrant sits on or near your property line (which is common in Metro Vancouver, as hydrants are typically located on municipal boulevards adjacent to private property), your fence must be set back far enough to maintain the required clearance. This usually means the fence line needs to jog inward at the hydrant location, creating a notch or cutback in the fence. The most common approaches are:

**Option 1 — Fence setback with a straight offset.** Set the entire fence section near the hydrant back 3 to 4 feet from the hydrant, creating a shallow rectangular notch in the fence line. This is the simplest approach and the one most municipalities prefer because it provides clear, unambiguous access from the street side.

**Option 2 — Fence angles around the hydrant.** Angle the fence inward on both sides of the hydrant to create a V-shaped or U-shaped cutback. This preserves more of your usable yard space than a straight offset but requires custom-cut fence panels at the angles, adding \$100 to \$300 to the project cost.

**Option 3 — Removable fence panel at the hydrant.** Install a fence panel on lift-out brackets adjacent to the hydrant, allowing the panel to be removed quickly for fire department access. Some municipalities accept this approach, but others do not — the concern is that a removable panel may be stuck, frozen, or blocked by objects when access is needed urgently. Check with your local fire department before relying on this design.

**Height restrictions may also apply near hydrants.** Even if your fence is set back the required distance, some Metro Vancouver municipalities restrict fence height within a certain radius of hydrants to ensure the hydrant remains visible from the street. A 6-foot privacy fence that technically clears the 3-foot radius but completely hides the hydrant from view may still draw a complaint or enforcement action, because firefighters arriving on scene need to be able to locate the hydrant quickly from their apparatus.

**The rules extend to all Metro Vancouver municipalities**, though specific clearance distances and enforcement approaches vary. Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, and other municipalities all have fire hydrant clearance requirements in their municipal bylaws and fire prevention regulations. The BC Fire Code (adopted from the National Fire Code of Canada) provides the baseline requirements, and individual municipalities may impose additional restrictions.

**Before installing a fence near a fire hydrant**, take these steps: First, measure the distance from the hydrant to your property line — many hydrants on municipal boulevards are actually 2 to 4 feet from the property line already, which means your fence at the property line may naturally provide sufficient clearance. Second, contact your local fire department's fire prevention office and ask about specific clearance requirements for your municipality. Third, include the hydrant location on your fence plan when getting quotes from contractors so they can account for the setback in their design and pricing.

Fencing around fire hydrants adds modest cost to a project — typically \$200 to \$600 for the custom routing — but ignoring the requirements can result in a municipal order to remove and rebuild the offending section at full cost,

plus potential fines. Your fence contractor should be aware of hydrant clearance requirements, but it's worth confirming this during the quoting process. Need a contractor who knows the local bylaws? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals across Metro Vancouver.

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## Can my strata corporation charge me for damage to common property fencing in BC?

**Yes, your strata corporation can potentially charge you for damage to common property fencing in BC, but only under specific circumstances defined by the Strata Property Act and your strata's bylaws.** The answer depends on whether the damage was caused by your actions (or inaction), whether the fencing is common property or limited common property, and what your strata's bylaws say about repair cost allocation.

Under the **BC Strata Property Act (SPA)**, the strata corporation is generally responsible for repairing and maintaining common property, which includes fences that serve the overall strata complex — perimeter fencing, fencing along common driveways, and fencing between strata lots and common areas. The cost of this maintenance is normally shared among all owners through strata fees. However, there are important exceptions that can shift costs to individual owners.

**If you caused the damage**, the strata corporation has the right to charge you for the repair costs. Section 72 of the Strata Property Act allows the strata corporation to require an owner to pay for the cost of repairing damage to common property if the damage was caused by the owner, their tenant, or their guests. This applies whether the damage was intentional (you backed your truck into the perimeter fence) or negligent (you failed to maintain a tree on your lot and it fell onto common property fencing). The strata council must pass a resolution to charge you, and you have the right to dispute the charge through the Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) if you believe it's unjust.

**Limited common property (LCP) fencing adds complexity.** Many strata developments in Metro Vancouver designate fences around individual patios, yards, and townhouse lots as limited common property — meaning it's technically owned by the strata corporation but designated for the exclusive use of a specific lot. Under the SPA's Standard Bylaws, the strata corporation is responsible for maintaining LCP, and the cost is shared through general strata fees. However, many strata corporations have amended their bylaws to shift LCP maintenance costs to the individual lot owner who has exclusive use. If your strata has such an amended bylaw, you may be responsible for maintaining and repairing the fence around your lot at your own expense — and the strata can enforce this through fines or by performing the repair and charging you.

**Check your strata's specific bylaws** — this is critical. The Standard Bylaws under the SPA are just the default starting point. Many Metro Vancouver strata corporations have extensively amended their bylaws regarding repair and maintenance responsibilities, and these amendments can significantly change who pays for what. Your strata's registered bylaws are available through the BC Land Title Office (LTSA) or from your strata council or property manager. Look specifically for bylaws addressing "repair and maintenance," "limited common property," and "user fees" or "cost recovery."

**The strata can also charge you indirectly through a special levy.** If the strata's perimeter fencing needs replacement — a common situation in Metro Vancouver where wood fences in the wet climate deteriorate over 15 to 20 years — the strata council may pass a special levy to fund the project. This levy is distributed among all owners based on unit entitlement (the proportional share assigned to each strata lot). While this isn't a direct charge for "damage," it's a cost that can run into thousands of dollars per unit for large-scale fence replacement. Strata owners should budget for these eventual costs, as wood fencing in Metro Vancouver's wet climate has a finite lifespan.

**If you want to modify or replace fencing on your strata lot,** you generally need written approval from the strata council before doing any work — even if the fence is limited common property designated for your exclusive use. Unauthorized alterations can result in the strata requiring you to restore the original fencing at your expense, plus potential fines under the strata's bylaws. The approval process typically involves submitting a written request describing the proposed work, materials, colours, and dimensions. Many strata corporations require that replacement fencing match the existing style and colour to maintain a uniform streetscape.

**Dispute resolution options** if you disagree with a strata's damage charge include requesting a hearing with the strata council, filing a complaint with the Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) — which handles most strata disputes in BC for claims under \$5,000 — or seeking legal advice from a lawyer experienced in BC strata law. The CRT process is relatively affordable (filing fees under \$300) and designed to be accessible without legal representation, though complex cases may benefit from a strata lawyer's guidance.

Before making any fence-related decisions on a strata property, review your bylaws, get council approval in writing, and keep records of all communications. If your strata is planning a fencing project, find qualified contractors through the Vancouver Construction Network at [vancouverconstructionnetwork.com](http://vancouverconstructionnetwork.com).

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Q20

## **What insurance do I need from a fence contractor working on my property in BC?**

**At minimum, you should require any fence contractor working on your BC property to carry Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance of at least \$2 million and active WorkSafeBC coverage.** These two forms of insurance protect you from the most common financial risks of a fence installation project — property damage, third-party injuries, and worker injury liability — and any legitimate, professional fence contractor in Metro Vancouver will have both.

**Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance** protects you if the contractor damages your property, your neighbour's property, or if a third party (such as a passerby) is injured during the work. Fence installation involves digging post holes — often with power augers — near underground utilities, adjacent structures, driveways, landscaping, and neighbouring properties. Even experienced contractors occasionally hit a buried irrigation line, crack a retaining wall footing, or drop a panel onto a vehicle. CGL insurance covers the cost of repairing this damage. In Metro Vancouver, reputable fence contractors carry \$2 million to \$5 million in CGL coverage. Ask to see the contractor's certificate of insurance (COI) before work begins, and verify that it's current — a COI from last year may reflect a lapsed policy.

**WorkSafeBC coverage** is the BC equivalent of workers' compensation insurance, and this is where many homeowners unknowingly expose themselves to significant financial risk. Under the BC Workers Compensation Act, if a worker is injured on your property and the contractor does not have active WorkSafeBC coverage, **you as the homeowner may be held liable for the worker's medical costs, lost wages, and rehabilitation expenses.** Fence installation is physical work involving heavy materials, power tools, deep holes, and concrete — injuries happen. A single serious back injury or a worker struck by a falling post can generate tens of thousands of dollars in costs.

To verify a contractor's WorkSafeBC status, you can request a **WorkSafeBC clearance letter**. A clearance letter confirms that the contractor is registered with WorkSafeBC and that their account is in good standing — meaning they've been reporting payroll and paying their premiums. You can request a clearance letter yourself through WorkSafeBC's online Clearance Letter application at [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com). The letter must be addressed to you (the hiring party) to be valid. A clearance letter showing "active and in good standing" confirms coverage up to the date the firm has satisfied its assessment requirements. Contractors with a strong compliance history may qualify for **GoldStar clearance status**, which provides advance clearance typically to the start of the next quarter.

**Request clearance letters both before and after the project.** A contractor can be in good standing when you hire them but fall behind on premiums during the project. Getting a clearance letter after the work is complete confirms that coverage was maintained throughout. If the post-completion clearance shows the contractor is no longer in good standing, WorkSafeBC may assess you for the unpaid premiums related to work done on your property.

**Additional insurance to consider requesting:**

**Automobile insurance** — if the contractor is driving vehicles and equipment onto your property (which is typical for fence installations that require delivery of posts, concrete, and panels), their commercial auto insurance should cover any damage to your driveway, landscaping, or structures caused by their vehicles.

**Completed operations coverage** (usually included within CGL) — this covers claims that arise after the work is finished. If a poorly anchored fence post fails six months later and falls onto your neighbour's car, completed

operations coverage pays the claim. Verify that your contractor's CGL policy includes completed operations coverage, as some bare-bones policies exclude it.

**Umbrella or excess liability** — for larger or more complex fence projects (automatic gate systems, tall commercial fencing, work on steep slopes or near structures), some homeowners request proof of umbrella liability coverage above the base CGL limit. This provides an extra layer of protection for catastrophic claims.

**What legitimate contractors will provide without hesitation:** A professional fence contractor in Metro Vancouver will gladly show you their CGL certificate of insurance, provide a WorkSafeBC clearance letter, and confirm their coverage limits. If a contractor is evasive about insurance, refuses to provide documentation, or claims they "don't need" WorkSafeBC coverage, that's a serious red flag — walk away. The financial risk to you as a homeowner is simply too high. Need help finding properly insured fence contractors? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with professionals who carry full insurance coverage.

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Q21

## What consumer protections exist for homeowners hiring fence contractors in British Columbia?

**British Columbia does not require fence contractors — or most renovation contractors — to hold a provincial licence, which means homeowner protections are more limited than many people assume.** Unlike trades such as electricians and gas fitters who must be licensed and certified, fence contractors in BC can operate without any mandatory licensing, bonding, or registration beyond a standard municipal business licence. This makes it especially important for homeowners to understand what protections do exist and how to use them.

**The BC Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act (BPCPA)** is the primary consumer protection legislation that applies to fence contractor transactions. Administered by Consumer Protection BC (CPBC), this act prohibits deceptive and unconscionable business practices, including misrepresenting the quality of materials or workmanship, charging for work not performed, using high-pressure sales tactics, and failing to deliver services that were contracted and paid for. If a fence contractor engages in any of these practices, you can file a complaint with Consumer Protection BC, which has the authority to investigate, mediate disputes, and take enforcement action against businesses that violate the act. Amendments taking effect in summer 2026 strengthen these protections further, with clearer contract requirements, better cancellation rights, and new protections against high-pressure direct-sales tactics.

**The BC Homeowner Protection Act (HPA)** primarily applies to builders of new homes — requiring licensing through BC Housing's Licensing and Consumer Services branch and mandatory third-party home warranty

insurance on new construction. Fence contractors doing standalone fence work (not building a new home) are generally not covered by the HPA. However, if your fence project is part of a larger new home construction or major renovation managed by a licensed residential builder, the HPA's requirements and protections may apply to the overall project.

**WorkSafeBC provides indirect but critical protection.** While WorkSafeBC is primarily a workers' compensation system (not a consumer protection body), hiring a contractor with active WorkSafeBC coverage protects you from liability if a worker is injured on your property. You can verify any contractor's WorkSafeBC status through a free clearance letter at [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com). Under the BC Workers Compensation Act, if you hire a contractor without WorkSafeBC coverage and their worker is injured on your property, you may be held liable for the injury costs — a risk that can run into tens of thousands of dollars.

**Written contracts are your strongest practical protection.** BC law does not require a written contract for fence work, but having one gives you enforceable legal standing if something goes wrong. A proper fence contract should include the contractor's full legal business name, address, and contact information; a detailed scope of work specifying materials (species, grade, dimensions), fence height, linear footage, post spacing, post depth, concrete specifications, and hardware; the total price with a payment schedule (never pay more than 10 to 15% upfront as a deposit — 30 to 50% at the materials stage and balance on completion is standard); start and estimated completion dates; warranty terms for both materials and workmanship; and a dispute resolution process.

**Dispute resolution options for BC homeowners** when a fence project goes wrong follow a tiered structure. For claims under \$5,000, disputes must first go through the **Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT)**, BC's online dispute resolution system that handles small claims and strata disputes. The CRT process is designed to be accessible without a lawyer, with filing fees under \$200. For claims between \$5,000 and \$35,000, BC Small Claims Court handles the dispute. For claims exceeding \$35,000, you would proceed to BC Supreme Court, where legal representation is strongly recommended. Most residential fence disputes fall within the CRT's jurisdiction, as even full fence replacement projects rarely exceed \$15,000 to \$20,000.

#### **Practical steps to protect yourself before hiring:**

Verify the contractor's municipal business licence — every legitimate contractor needs one in the municipality where they operate. Ask for and check references from recent local projects (within the last 6 to 12 months). Request proof of Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance with a minimum \$2 million limit, and verify it's current. Obtain a WorkSafeBC clearance letter confirming the contractor is registered and in good standing. Get at least three written quotes from different contractors to understand the market rate for your project — quotes significantly below market suggest corners will be cut. Never pay the full amount upfront — structure payments tied to project milestones.

**If something goes wrong during or after the project**, document everything with dated photos and written correspondence (email or text — avoid verbal-only communications). Send a written demand letter to the contractor outlining the deficiency and requesting a specific remedy within a reasonable timeframe (typically 14 to 30 days). If the contractor doesn't respond or refuses to remedy the issue, file a complaint with Consumer Protection BC and initiate a CRT claim if financial loss has occurred.

The lack of mandatory contractor licensing in BC puts more responsibility on homeowners to vet their fence contractor carefully. Take the time to check references, verify insurance, get a detailed written contract, and structure payments to protect your investment. Vancouver Fence Builders can help connect you with reputable local fence professionals through the Vancouver Construction Network.

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## What are the noise bylaw hours for fence construction in the City of Vancouver?

**In the City of Vancouver, residential construction noise — including fence installation — is permitted Monday through Saturday from 7:30 AM to 8:00 PM, with no construction noise allowed on Sundays and statutory holidays.** These hours are governed by the City of Vancouver Noise Control Bylaw, and violating them can result in fines starting at \$250 for a first offence.

The specific bylaw provisions that apply to fence construction are straightforward. **Power tools, hammering, post-hole auger operation, and concrete mixing** all fall under construction noise and must occur within the permitted hours. This means your fence contractor cannot start running an auger at 6:00 AM on a Monday, even if the crew is eager to get an early start — and they cannot continue hammering boards at 9:00 PM on a summer evening when there's still daylight. The 7:30 AM start time and 8:00 PM end time are firm, and neighbours who are disturbed by early or late construction noise can call 311 to report a violation.

**Saturday construction follows the same hours as weekdays** — 7:30 AM to 8:00 PM — in the City of Vancouver. Some homeowners assume Saturday hours are more restrictive, but the bylaw treats Saturday the same as any other weekday for construction noise purposes. That said, experienced fence contractors in Vancouver generally recommend starting no earlier than 8:00 or 8:30 AM on Saturdays as a courtesy to neighbours, even though the bylaw allows a 7:30 AM start. Starting early on a Saturday is technically legal but can create neighbourhood friction that's easily avoided.

**Sunday and statutory holiday construction is prohibited** regardless of the time. This includes all major statutory holidays — New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, BC Day, Labour Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day. If your fence project spans a week that includes a holiday, the contractor must skip that day entirely. Planning your project timeline around holidays prevents scheduling conflicts and ensures the crew can work efficiently during permitted days.

**Other Metro Vancouver municipalities have slightly different noise bylaw hours**, which matters if your property is in Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond, or another municipality rather than Vancouver proper. Burnaby permits construction noise Monday through Saturday from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM (30 minutes earlier start than Vancouver). Surrey allows construction from 7:00 AM to 7:30 PM Monday through Saturday, with a slightly earlier end time. Richmond permits construction noise from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Saturday. Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody have similar but not identical hours. North Vancouver (both City and District) generally permits construction from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM depending on the specific zone and permit conditions. Always confirm the hours for your specific municipality — a quick call to your city hall or a search of the municipal

noise bylaw provides the definitive answer.

**Practical considerations for fence construction timing in Metro Vancouver.** A typical residential fence installation project — 100 to 150 linear feet of cedar privacy fencing — takes 2 to 4 days for a crew of two to three installers. Day one usually involves layout, post hole digging (the noisiest phase, especially if using a power auger), and post setting in concrete. Day two is typically a concrete cure day with minimal on-site work. Days three and four involve rail and board installation, which generates moderate hammering or screw-driving noise. If noise is a concern for your neighbours, ask your contractor to schedule the auger work for mid-morning to mid-afternoon on a weekday, avoiding the early morning and evening hours when neighbours are most likely to be bothered.

**What to do if a neighbour complains about noise within permitted hours.** If your fence contractor is working within the legal hours and a neighbour complains, the contractor is within their rights to continue working. However, a brief conversation acknowledging the disruption and providing an estimated completion date goes a long way toward maintaining good relations — especially important when the fence itself is on or near the shared property line. If the noise complaint escalates to a 311 call, a City of Vancouver bylaw enforcement officer may attend to confirm that work is within permitted hours, but no fine will be issued if the hours are being respected.

When hiring a fence contractor, confirm that their quoted timeline accounts for noise bylaw hours and any weekend or holiday restrictions. Find experienced local fence professionals through Vancouver Fence Builders — our free matching service connects you with contractors who know the local rules across Metro Vancouver.

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Q23

## Can I build a fence taller than 6 feet for security purposes in Surrey?

**You can build a fence taller than 6 feet (1.83 metres) in Surrey, but it requires a building permit, must comply with the Surrey Zoning Bylaw, and may require a development variance permit depending on the specific zone, location on the lot, and the height you're requesting.** Simply wanting more security does not automatically entitle you to exceed the standard height limit — the City of Surrey evaluates over-height fence applications based on specific criteria.

The standard fence height limits in Surrey are **1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards** and **1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards**, measured from the finished grade on the higher side of the fence. These limits apply to all fence types — wood, vinyl, chain-link, aluminum, and any combination. For most residential security needs, a well-built 6-foot fence with a locked gate provides adequate deterrence and privacy. However, there are legitimate situations where a taller fence is justified, and Surrey has a process for approving them.

**To build a fence exceeding the standard height, you'll need to apply for a development variance permit (DVP) through the City of Surrey Planning Department.** The DVP application process involves submitting detailed plans showing the proposed fence height, location, materials, and design; paying an application fee (typically \$1,000 to \$2,000 for a variance in Surrey); and in many cases, the application is reviewed by City Council or a designate, with notification sent to adjacent property owners who may provide comments. The process typically takes 4 to 12 weeks from application to decision.

**Security-related justifications that Surrey typically considers** when evaluating over-height fence requests include: properties that back onto commercial or industrial zones where security risk is demonstrably higher; corner lots with high pedestrian traffic where a taller fence provides necessary privacy and safety; properties adjacent to parks, trails, or greenways where trespassing or vandalism is documented; and properties with specific security concerns supported by evidence (police reports, documented incidents). Simply stating "I want more security" without supporting evidence is generally insufficient for a variance approval.

**Practical alternatives to an over-height fence** that don't require a variance permit and often achieve similar security goals include: adding a **lattice or trellis extension** to the top of a 6-foot fence — in many cases, an open lattice section above the solid fence portion is treated differently than a solid fence extension, though you should confirm this with Surrey's planning department. Lattice provides additional height (typically 1 to 2 feet) while maintaining some visibility and airflow, and it makes climbing over the fence more difficult. Another option is **planting a dense hedge or tall shrubs** immediately behind or in front of the fence — there is no height restriction on vegetation in most Surrey residential zones, and a 6-foot fence backed by an 8-foot laurel hedge creates an extremely effective security barrier.

**Security-specific fence features that work within the 6-foot limit** are often more effective than simply building a taller fence. Anti-climb design features include: eliminating horizontal rails on the outside of the fence (which serve as footholds); adding a 45-degree anti-climb arm at the top of fence posts (common on commercial security fences but available for residential); using fence post caps with pointed finials that discourage gripping; and installing motion-activated security lighting along the fence line. These features, combined with a solid 6-foot fence, provide security comparable to or better than a taller unmodified fence.

**Chain-link with barbed wire or razor wire** is sometimes requested for residential security fencing in Surrey, but barbed wire and razor wire are generally **prohibited on residential properties** in Surrey's residential zones. These materials are typically restricted to industrial, commercial, and agricultural zones. Installing barbed wire on a residential fence without proper zoning permission will result in a removal order.

**Cost implications of an over-height fence** extend beyond the variance permit fee. A 7 or 8-foot fence requires taller posts (typically 6x6 for structural stability at that height), deeper post holes (minimum 2.5 to 3 feet for an 8-foot fence, compared to 2 feet for a 6-foot fence), more concrete per footing, and taller boards or panels. An 8-foot

cedar privacy fence in Surrey typically costs \$65 to \$100 per linear foot installed — roughly 30 to 50% more than a standard 6-foot fence — plus the variance permit fee. For a 100-linear-foot run, budget \$8,500 to \$13,000 total including the permit process.

**Before pursuing an over-height fence, consult with Surrey's Planning Department** at City Hall (13450 104 Avenue) or by phone. A pre-application discussion — usually free — gives you a realistic sense of whether your specific situation is likely to receive variance approval, what documentation you'll need, and the expected timeline. This conversation can save you the \$1,000+ application fee if approval is unlikely. Need help finding a fence contractor experienced with security fencing? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with professionals who handle permit-required projects across Metro Vancouver.

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Q24

## Can I install a fence myself to save money in Vancouver and what permits do I need?

**Yes, you can legally install a fence yourself in Metro Vancouver — there is no licensing requirement for homeowners doing their own fence work — but the savings are smaller than most people expect, and the permit requirements depend on your fence's height, location, and type.** Most standard residential fences under 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards and under 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards do not require a building permit in most Metro Vancouver municipalities, though you should always confirm with your local building department before starting.

The realistic savings from DIY fence installation in Metro Vancouver run about 40-50% compared to a professional install, which sounds significant until you factor in tool rental, material waste, and the learning curve. A professional cedar privacy fence runs \$40-\$80 per linear foot installed. Materials alone for the same fence cost \$20-\$40 per linear foot — so on a 100-foot fence, you're looking at \$2,000-\$4,000 in materials versus \$4,000-\$8,000 professionally installed. However, you'll need to rent a post hole auger (\$75-\$150 per day), buy or rent a level, string line, and other tools (\$50-\$100), purchase concrete bags (\$8-\$12 per post), and plan for 10-15% material waste from cutting errors. Realistic DIY savings on that 100-foot fence: \$1,500-\$3,000.

**Before digging a single post hole, you must call BC One Call at 1-800-474-6886 for a free utility locate.** This is legally required in BC and protects you from hitting buried gas lines, electrical cables, water mains, or telecommunications lines. The service is free and typically completed within a few business days. Hitting a gas line is not just dangerous — the repair costs and liability can run into thousands of dollars.

**Permits and regulations you need to know about:** Standard residential fences under the height limit generally don't require a building permit, but several situations do — fences exceeding municipal height limits, retaining wall and fence combinations, pool enclosures (which must meet specific BC Building Code requirements for height, gate hardware, and climb-resistance), and electric or motorized gate systems. Hardwired automatic gate openers require an electrical permit and inspection by Technical Safety BC. If you're on a strata property (townhouse, bare land strata), you need written strata council approval before any fence installation, even within your own lot boundaries.

**A property line survey is strongly recommended before any new fence installation,** especially if you're building near a boundary. A survey by a licensed BC Land Surveyor costs \$1,000-\$3,000, but building a fence even a few inches onto your neighbour's property creates legal liability and may require removal at your expense. At minimum, discuss fence placement with your neighbours before starting and agree on the fence line.

**The parts of fence installation that trip up DIYers most often are post setting and gate hanging.** Posts must be plumb, properly spaced (typically 6-8 feet on centre), set to the correct depth (minimum one-third of total post length below grade — so 2 feet deep for a 6-foot fence with 8-foot posts), and anchored in concrete with gravel drainage below. In Metro Vancouver's wet clay soil, skipping the gravel drainage bed is a common mistake that leads to premature post rot. Each post hole needs 4-6 inches of drainage gravel before the post goes in, with concrete poured above the gravel. Posts must cure for 24-48 hours before attaching rails and boards.

Gates are the most technically demanding part of any fence and the most common source of DIY regret. A gate that isn't perfectly square, hung on posts that aren't plumb, or built with undersized hardware will sag, drag, and fail to latch within months. If you're doing a DIY fence, consider hiring a professional for just the gate portion — most fence contractors will do gate-only work for \$300-\$800 depending on size and style.

For a first-time DIYer in Metro Vancouver, a straight run of cedar or pressure-treated privacy fence on flat ground with good soil is a reasonable project. Slopes, rocky soil (common on the North Shore and in Coquitlam), long runs with multiple gates, or properties with access challenges are better left to professionals.

## Can I build a fence across a drainage easement on my property in Surrey?

**Generally, no — you cannot build a permanent fence across a registered drainage easement on your property in Surrey without the easement holder's written consent, and even with consent, the fence design must allow unobstructed access for maintenance and not impede water flow.** Drainage easements are legal rights granted to the municipality (City of Surrey), a utility, or a neighbouring property to access and maintain drainage infrastructure, and building a permanent structure across one can result in a forced removal order at your expense.

A **drainage easement** is a legal encumbrance registered on your property's title at the BC Land Title Office. It typically grants the City of Surrey (or sometimes Metro Vancouver Regional District for regional drainage) the right to access a specific strip of your property — usually 3 to 6 metres wide — to maintain ditches, culverts, storm sewers, swales, or overland drainage paths. Even though you own the land, the easement restricts what you can build on it. The easement terms are spelled out in the registered document, and they almost universally prohibit permanent structures, including fences with concrete footings, that could interfere with drainage flow or block maintenance access.

Surrey has an extensive network of drainage infrastructure because much of the city sits on relatively flat, low-lying terrain with a high water table. The City takes drainage easement enforcement seriously — if you build a fence across a drainage easement without approval and it causes flooding on neighbouring properties or prevents the City from performing maintenance, you can be ordered to remove the fence and may be liable for any damage caused.

**Before building any fence near a drainage easement**, take these steps. First, obtain a copy of your property's **title search** from the BC Land Title Office (available online through BC Land Title and Survey Authority for about \$15). This document lists all registered easements and their terms. Second, request a copy of the **easement plan** showing the exact location and width of the easement on your lot. Third, contact the **City of Surrey Engineering Department** to discuss your fencing plans — they can tell you whether any accommodation is possible for your specific situation.

There are **limited circumstances** where a fence may be permitted on or across a drainage easement. Some municipalities allow removable or temporary fencing that can be taken down quickly for maintenance access — for example, a fence with posts set in ground sleeves (rather than concrete) that can be pulled out, or a section with a wide gate that provides full-width equipment access. The City of Surrey may grant written permission for this type of installation, but it requires formal approval and typically comes with conditions — such as your obligation to remove the fence section within 24 to 48 hours of a maintenance access request, at your own cost.

**Chain-link fencing** is sometimes permitted along the edges of drainage easements (not across them) because it doesn't impede water flow and can be cut and replaced if emergency access is needed. However, this still requires confirmation from the City.

**What happens if you build without checking?** If you install a fence across a drainage easement without the easement holder's consent, the City of Surrey can issue a removal order requiring you to take down the fence at your own expense. If the fence causes drainage problems — backing up water onto neighbouring properties, damaging drainage infrastructure, or impeding flow during heavy rainfall — you may be liable for the resulting damage. Insurance typically does not cover losses arising from unauthorized construction on easements.

The practical impact on your fencing project depends on **where the easement crosses your lot**. If it runs along the rear property line, you may need to set your fence 3 to 6 metres forward of the rear boundary, reducing your usable fenced area. If it bisects the middle of your lot, you'll need a creative solution — possibly a fence that stops at each side of the easement with a wide removable section or gate system across the easement itself.

This is one situation where a **property survey** by a licensed BC Land Surveyor is essential. The surveyor can physically mark the easement boundaries on your lot so your fence contractor knows exactly where the restriction begins and ends. A survey costs \$500 to \$2,000 but prevents the far more expensive mistake of building a fence that must be removed. Need help planning a fence around a drainage easement? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with contractors experienced in navigating these situations.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver Fence Builders. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any fencing project. Information is current as of March 15, 2026 and may change. Visit [vancouverfencebuilders.com](https://vancouverfencebuilders.com) for the latest answers.