

RESIDENTIAL MEASUREMENT STANDARD

Purpose: This bulletin describes the Residential Measurement Standard (RMS) in Alberta, which licensed real estate professionals must use when measuring residential properties.

This bulletin applies to all residential real estate professionals.

Property measurement is the process of identifying and quantifying the physical area of a property. A measurement standard is a consistent methodology to determine an area; such standards are based on transparent, uniform principles and protocols.

The Residential Measurement Standard (RMS) contains nine principles, which licensed real estate professionals must follow when measuring residential properties. The RMS does not apply when real estate professionals measure non-residential properties, such as commercial, industrial, or retail premises.

RECA does not require sellers or their real estate representatives to represent a property's size when marketing it. However, if they are including property size in their listing information or marketing materials, it needs to be an accurate representation of the RMS area.

INFORMATION BULLETINS

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Principles of the Residential Measurement Standard (RMS)

1. Real estate professionals must use the RMS.
2. Identify if the measurement system is metric or imperial, and apply it consistently. Measurements must be calculated to within 2% of the RMS size.
3. For detached properties, measure the property using the exterior wall at the foundation.
4. For properties with common walls, such as half-duplexes, townhouses, and apartments, measure the interior perimeter walls (paint-to-paint) at floor level. An additional area representation may be made assuming exterior measurements.
5. Include floor levels that are entirely above grade and exclude floor levels if any portion is below grade. Below grade levels may be measured, but the area must not be included in the RMS area.
6. Include all additions to the main structure and conversions of above grade areas within the structure if they are weatherproof and suitable for year-round use.
7. The property must have a minimum floor-to-ceiling height of 2.13 metres (7 feet). If the ceiling is sloped, the area with a floor-to-ceiling

height of at least 1.52 metres (5 feet) is included in the RMS area, provided there is a ceiling height of 2.13 metres (7 feet) somewhere in the room.

8. Include extensions from the main structure that have a minimum floor-to-ceiling height of 1.5 metres (5 feet), such as cantilevers, bay and bow windows, and dormers.
9. Exclude open areas that have no floor, such as vaulted areas.

Discussing the RMS with clients

Real estate professionals must make every effort to ensure their clients understand the RMS and its implications. They must discuss the RMS with clients so the client can make an informed decision about property size and measurements. A thorough and documented discussion between real estate professionals and clients fulfills the real estate professional's fiduciary obligations.

When Representing Sellers

Real estate professionals must discuss the following with the seller:

- the relationship between property size and asking price
- the RMS:
 - what is included and excluded in the measurements
 - how professionals take measurements and calculate them
 - how size descriptors in marketing materials must follow the RMS
- if the property is a condominium:
 - the difference between the RMS size and the condominium unit registered size
 - what is included and excluded in the RMS size
 - what is included and excluded in the condominium unit registered size
- sellers are not required to represent the size of their property, however:
 - property size is often important to buyers and other real estate professionals
 - the listing service/property database may have a mandatory property size field
- if the seller wants to represent the size of their property, they need to use the RMS
 - sellers and their professionals may provide additional information, if it's not misleading and it meets RMS requirements
- if the real estate professional will measure the seller's property or engage another qualified person to measure it based on the RMS, and who will pay the cost

When Representing Buyers

Real estate professionals must discuss the following with the buyer:

- how property size factors into the buyer's decision to purchase
- the relationship between property size and selling price
- the RMS:
 - what is included and excluded in the measurements
 - how professionals will take measurements and calculate them
- if the property is a condominium:
 - the difference between the RMS size and the condominium unit registered size
 - what is included and excluded in the RMS size
 - what is included and excluded in the condominium unit registered size
- the buyer's options to determine property size, and their instructions

Property Measurement Best Practice

Discuss RMS with your client: Real estate professionals must discuss the RMS principles with sellers and buyers so they can make informed decisions regarding property measurements and RMS area. They must make every effort to ensure their clients understand property measurements and their implications.

Perform due diligence: Measure the property or engage competent persons to calculate the RMS area of the property. Do not guess at measurements, do not copy measurements from previous property listing information, and do not rely on area size provided by builders.

Create measurement records: Sketch the property's floor plan(s) and grade levels. Record all measurements, calculations, and relevant notes, including property address, seller's name, and measurement date. Retain the records for the client's brokerage file.

Handle open areas and vaulted areas correctly: For detached properties, real estate professionals must subtract vaulted areas from the level to ensure the outcome is consistent with exterior measurements. This also applies to areas that do not meet the minimum ceiling height requirements.

Know how to operate the measurement tools: Read the measurements, and record the data. If using a tape measure, clients may hold the end of the tape measure under your direction. Consider taking advantage of newer technology, such as laser measurement devices and CADD (computer-aided design and drafting) software.

Requests to use another standard: Real estate professionals must use the RMS. However, they may provide additional information to meet client objectives, as long as the information is consistent with the disclosures the RMS requires, and is not misleading.

Decide on the measurement system: Avoid measurement conversion errors by taking measurements in the measurement system the listing services/property databases use. If engaging a person/service to measure the property, indicate the measurement system they should use.

Identify measurement systems: Identify your preferred measurement system and take all measurements for that property in the same measurement system (i.e. imperial or metric).

Make measurement conversions carefully: If you must convert measurements from one system to another, do the calculations competently, check for errors, and note the conversion date. Retain the records for the client's brokerage file.

Get lot measurements from RPR: Ask the seller for a copy of their Real Property Report (RPR) and rely on the lot measurements illustrated on the document. Qualified land surveyors prepare RPRs. Do not attempt to measure residential lots, as fences may not be on the actual boundaries of the property.

Disclose condominium unit registered size: For condominiums, provide the registered unit size in addition to the RMS area. Differentiate them properly and ensure clients understand the difference between them. When disclosing the unit registered size, indicate what the measurement includes. All property information and communications should disclose this information.

Engage a measurement service: If engaging a property measurement company, real estate professionals must ensure the person is able to measure the property competently according to the RMS. Look into the person's reputation and determine whether they carry E & O insurance.

Enforcement of RMS

RECA applies an approach called "right-touch regulation." This means RECA's approach to compliance and enforcement of standards will be consistent, proportionate, effective, transparent, and timely. Where appropriate, it will focus on providing information, advice and suggestions for change in future behaviour. That said, RECA will use the full range and level of sanctions available in its overall strategy to obtain industry compliance and protection of consumers.

When real estate professionals take steps to provide competent service and accurately represent RMS area, RECA will consider that as a mitigating factor even in the face of errors or innocent misrepresentation. However, when real estate professionals are unaware of the RMS, use a different measurement, or when a misrepresentation is reckless or intentional, RECA will consider this aggravating even if the differences are small or immaterial.

Related information

Legislation

- *Real Estate Act Rules* - section 41(b)
- *Real Estate Act Rules* - section 42(a)

Information Bulletins

- Competent Service
- Enforcement of the Residential Measurement Standard

RECA Guide

Guide to the Residential Measurement Standard in Alberta