Real Estate Council Alberta

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RECA Resource
Information Bulletins

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Residential Measurement Standard

Purpose

This bulletin applies to residential real estate licensees. It explains the Residential Measurement Standard (RMS), the ten principles licensees must follow when measuring a residential property, and what licensees must discuss with sellers and buyers regarding property size.

Regulatory status: Information Bulletins provide guidance on how RECA interprets and applies existing legislative requirements. They do not create new legal requirements or amend the *Real Estate Act* or the *Real Estate Act* Rules.

Why this matters

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

The Residential Measurement Standard (RMS) sets out ten principles that real estate licensees must follow when measuring residential properties. The RMS does not apply to the measurement of non-residential properties, such as commercial, industrial, or retail premises.

RECA does not require sellers or their licensees to disclose a property's size when marketing it. However, if they include property size in their listing information or marketing materials, it must accurately reflect the RMS area.

What the Rules require

Principles of the RMS

1. Real estate licensees 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 semi-detached and townhouse properties, measure the property using the exterior wall at the foundation. If the thickness of the demising wall(s) cannot be determined, the thickness of an exterior wall shall be used.
5. For apartment-style condominiums, measure the interior perimeter walls (paint-to-paint) at floor level. An additional area representation may be made assuming exterior measurements.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Exclude open areas that have no floor, such as vaulted areas.

Discussing the RMS with clients. Licensees must make every effort to ensure their clients understand the RMS and its implications. They must discuss the RMS with clients so clients can make informed decisions about property size and measurements. A thorough, documented discussion between licensees and their clients fulfills the licensee's fiduciary obligations.

When representing sellers, licensees must discuss the following with the seller: Licensees 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 licensees 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 licensees

    - 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 licensees may provide additional information if it's not misleading and it meets RMS requirements
- if the licensee 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. Licensees 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 licensees 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

Best Practices

Best practices go beyond the minimum requirements outlined above. They are not mandatory, but they reflect the level of service RECA encourages licensees to provide.

- **Discuss RMS with your client**: Licensees must discuss RMS principles with sellers and buyers so they can make informed decisions about 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 professionals to calculate the RMS area of the property. Do not guess at measurements, do not copy measurements from previous property listings, and do not rely on area sizes provided by builders.
- **Create measurement records**: Sketch the property's floor plan(s) and grade levels. Record all measurements, calculations, and relevant notes, including the property address, seller's name, and measurement date. Retain the records in the client's brokerage file.
- **Handle open and vaulted areas correctly**: For detached properties, licensees must subtract vaulted areas from the level to ensure the result 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 using newer technology, such as laser measurement devices and CADD (computer-aided design and drafting) software.
- **Requests to use another standard**: Licensees must use the RMS. However, they may provide additional information to meet client objectives, provided that the information is consistent with the disclosures the RMS requires and is not misleading.
- **Decide on the measurement system**: Avoid conversion errors by taking measurements in the system used by the listing services/property databases. If engaging a person or service to measure the property, specify the measurement system they should use.
- **Identify measurement systems**: Identify your preferred measurement system and take all measurements for that property using the same system (i.e., imperial or metric).
- **Make measurement conversions carefully**: If you must convert measurements from one system to another, perform the calculations accurately, check for errors, and record the conversion date. Retain the records in the client's brokerage file.
- **Obtain lot measurements from the RPR**: Ask the seller for a copy of their Real Property Report (RPR) and rely on the lot measurements shown in the document. Qualified land surveyors prepare RPRs. Do not attempt to measure residential lots, as fences may not align with the property's actual boundaries.
- **Disclose condominium unit registered size**: For condominiums, provide the registered unit size in addition to the RMS area. Clearly differentiate the two and ensure clients understand the difference. When disclosing the unit registered size, specify 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 licensees must ensure the person can competently measure the property in accordance with the RMS. Review the person's reputation and confirm whether they carry E&O insurance. Real estate licensees are responsible for all property measurement representations.

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 future behavioural change. That said, RECA will use the full range and level of sanctions available in its overall strategy to achieve industry compliance and protect consumers.

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

Related Information

Legislation	Relevant Sections
Real Estate Act Rules	ss. 41(b), 42(a)
Guides	Guide to the Residential Measurement Standard in Alberta
Additional Resource: Information Bulletins	Competent Service Enforcement of the Residential Measurement Standard