



## Electrical Bulletin 23-03

December 20, 2023

### Re: Usable wall space and kitchen counter receptacles

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Please see below for answers to several different scenarios regarding usable wall space in dwelling units.

Several of the scenarios below could result in the use of electrical equipment that the installer may not be familiar with. As with any other installation, please be sure to familiarize yourself with the manufacturer's installation instructions, and closely follow their requirements. If the instructions seem unclear or look to conflict with something in the Canadian Electrical Code, or you have any other questions regarding this or any other bulletin, please contact our office.

#### Scope:

#### 1) Kitchen Counters

- a. If windows or unusual wall construction prohibit the installation of kitchen counter receptacles, are they still required?
- b. Can kitchen counter receptacles satisfy the requirements for general use receptacles, or vice versa?
- c. When a kitchen counter starts in a corner and the wall line continues in two directions, how do I measure wall length?

#### 2) Usable Wall Space

- a. Is the wall space in front of a split stud wall cavity that a pocket door opens into considered usable wall space for the purpose of spacing receptacles?
- b. If a house has large windows extending all the way to the floor, do I still need to place receptacles there? What about the spaces in between those windows?
- c. Are sections of wall occupied by electric baseboard heaters considered usable wall space?
- d. If an owner intends to install built-in furniture along a section of wall eventually, do I still need to install receptacles there?

#### 3) Walk in Closets

- a. Am I permitted to install convenience receptacles in a walk-in closet?

Ref. Canadian Electrical Code Rule 26-722 (a), (c), & (d)

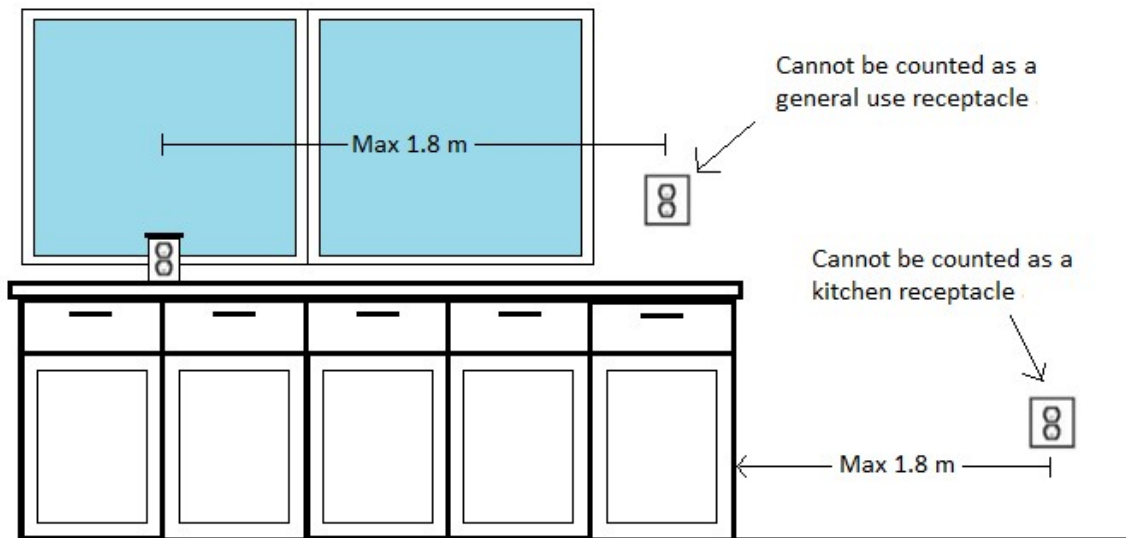
## 1) Kitchen counters

- a. **If windows or unusual wall construction prohibit the installation of kitchen counter receptacles, are they still required?**

Yes, unconventional kitchens with large show windows or limited wall space still require the same receptacle spacing as more traditional kitchens. There are numerous alternatives available such as pop-ups or other hidden types of receptacles that will need to be used to satisfy spacing in these cases. When planning alternatives for these projects please be sure the equipment is approved for the intended application and not in violation of any other rules in the Canadian Electrical Code.

- b. **Can kitchen counter receptacles satisfy the requirements for general use receptacles, or vice versa?**

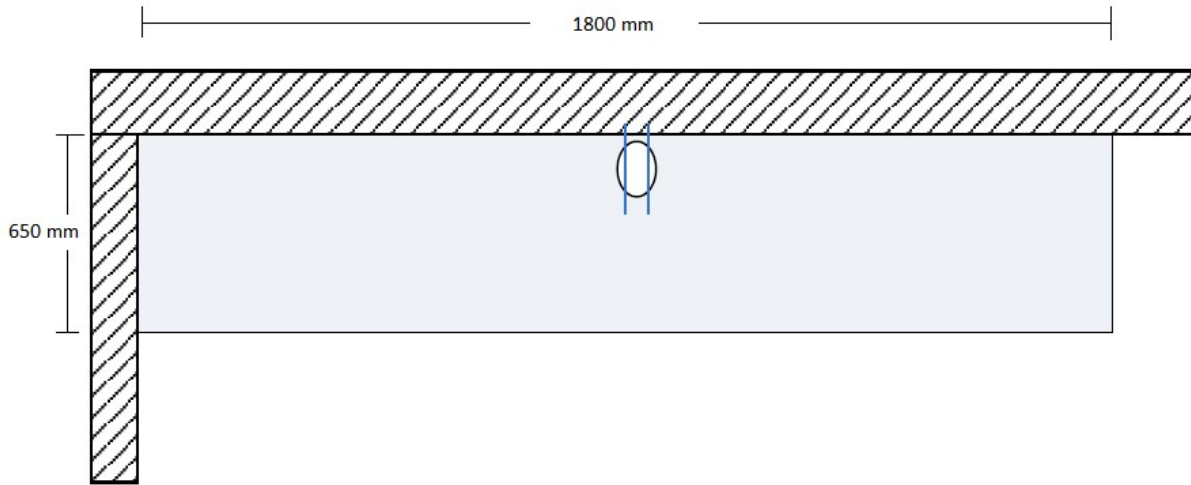
No. We have come across a few locations where a kitchen counter receptacle was being used to satisfy the requirement for a nearby general use receptacle. Receptacles required by other rules in the code cannot be used as kitchen counter receptacles. Likewise, counter receptacles cannot be used to satisfy the requirements for any other receptacles.



- c. **When a kitchen counter starts in a corner and the wall line continues in two directions, how do I measure wall length?**

The measurement for spacing your counter receptacles is only taken along the wall line following the direction the kitchen counter is facing. In the diagram below, there is 1800 millimeters of usable wall space for the purpose of installing your counter receptacles. The

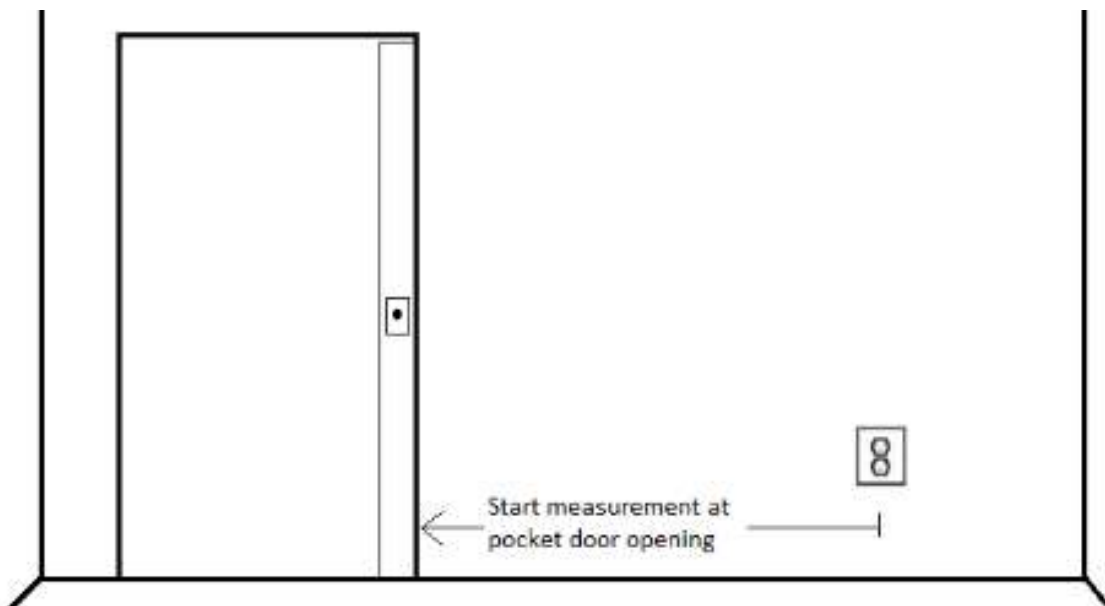
650 millimeters of wall length on the left wall does not need to be considered unless the cabinets turn and continue along that wall line.



## 2) Usable wall space

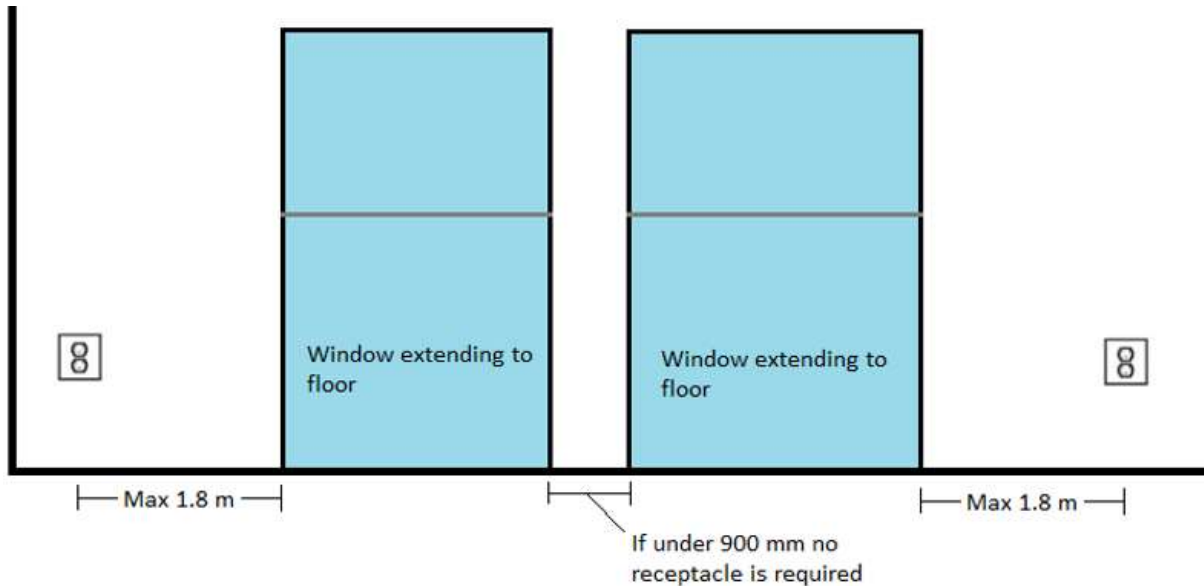
- a. Is the wall space in front of a split stud wall cavity that a pocket door opens into considered usable wall space for the purpose of spacing receptacles?

Yes, the wall space in front of the “split stud” wall cavity that is occupied by a pocket door when opened is still considered usable wall space. While a hinged door swings open and needs to physically occupy the space in front of the wall beside the door, a pocket door does not open into that space, and so plug in equipment can be located there. As such, spacing measurements at pocket doors must start at the edge of the door opening to ensure that this section of the room has acceptable access to a receptacle. For example:



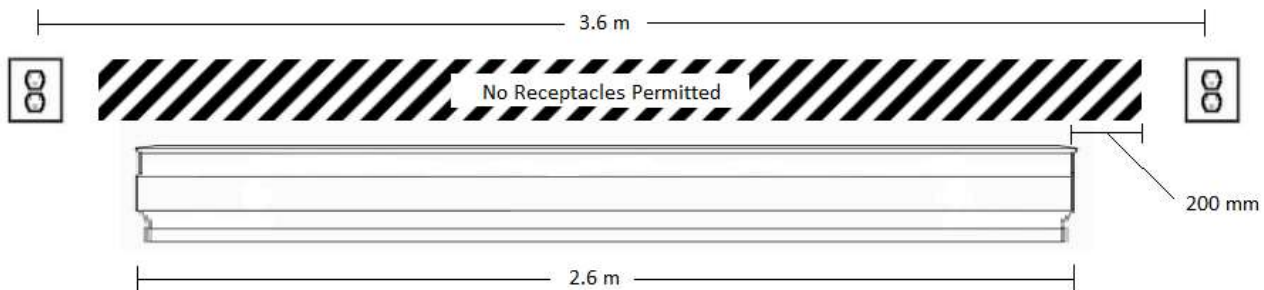
**b. If a house has large windows extending all the way to the floor, do I still need to place receptacles there? What about the spaces in between those windows?**

The Canadian Electrical Code excludes wall sections occupied by windows that extend all the way to the floor, and any wall space less than 900 millimeters wide from requiring general use receptacles. When locating receptacles in a room with windows as described, your spacing measurement needs to start from the edge of the window to ensure a receptacle is located within 1.8 meters on any side of that window that is deemed as usable wall space. In addition, any wall spaces in-between large windows only require a receptacle if they exceed 900 millimeters. Pictured here:



**c. Are sections of wall occupied by electric baseboard heaters considered usable wall space?**

Wall sections occupied by baseboard heaters are still usable wall space for the purpose of receptacle spacing. When planning the layout of a room, carefully consider the location and length of baseboard heaters so that receptacles are not located above those heater(s), but still satisfy minimum spacing requirements. This is especially important when using large heaters. For example, a 2.6 meter baseboard heater only leaves 1 meter remaining before you exceed the maximum distance between receptacles of 3.6 meters. When you include the minimum 200 millimeter horizontal space from the heater, you only have a small amount of wall space left to locate these receptacles for a code compliant installation. See below:



The above is specific to electric baseboard heaters. Requirements around hydronic baseboard heaters are varied, please be sure to check manufacturers instructions to verify if receptacles can be located above those heaters.

**d. If an owner intends to install built-in furniture along a section of wall eventually, do I still need to install receptacles there?**

Sections of wall are deemed unusable when they incorporate permanent installations that limit the use of that wall space. Furniture such as a wardrobe or bookshelf etc. may fall under this classification provided that the installation is clearly permanent. However, these sections of built-in furniture need to be installed before final for it to pass and the permit to be closed. Locations that “may” have built in furniture in the future are not treated as unusable wall space.

**3) Walk in closets**

**a. Am I permitted to install convenience receptacles in a walk-in closet?**

Yes. Although the Canadian Electrical Code exempts closets from the receptacle spacing requirements of other rooms, it does not prohibit their installation.

There are many different and unusual ways a builder might construct a room, and sometimes an unusual layout will make it difficult to determine how to remain code compliant. If you ever have questions regarding an unusual layout or construction method, please do not hesitate to contact our department for clarity. Also, feel free to provide feedback on whether you like this type of bulletin and would be interested in seeing more information like this in the future.

Regards,

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Chief Electrical Inspector

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