CHAPTER 3
OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND USE

User note:

About this chapter: Chapter 3 provides the criteria by which buildings and structures are classified into use groups and occupancies. Through the balance of the code, occupancy classification is fundamental in the setting of features of construction; occupant safety requirements, especially building limitations; means of egress; fire protection systems; and interior finishes.

SECTION 301
SCOPE

301.1 General. The provisions of this chapter shall control the classification of all buildings and structures as to occupancy and use. Different classifications of occupancy and use represent varying levels of hazard and risk to building occupants and adjacent properties.

SECTION 302
OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND USE DESIGNATION

302.1 Occupancy classification. Occupancy classification is the formal designation of the primary purpose of the building, structure or portion thereof. Structures shall be classified into one or more of the occupancy groups specified in this section based on the nature of the hazards and risks to building occupants generally associated with the intended purpose of the building or structure. An area, room or space that is intended to be occupied at different times for different purposes shall comply with all applicable requirements associated with such potential multipurpose. Structures containing multiple occupancy groups shall comply with Section 508. Where a structure is proposed for a purpose that is not specified in this section, such structure shall be classified in the occupancy it most nearly resembles, according to the fire safety and relative hazard, and shall comply with Section 503.1.4.

2. Business (see Section 304): Group B.
3. Educational (see Section 305): Group E.
7. Mercantile (see Section 309): Group M.
8. Residential (see Section 310): Groups R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4.
10. Utility and Miscellaneous (see Section 312): Group U.

302.2 Use designation. Occupancy groups contain subordinate uses having similar hazards and risks to building occupants. Uses include, but are not limited to, those functional designations specified within the occupancy group descriptions in Section 302.1. Certain uses require specific limitations and controls in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 4 and elsewhere in this code.

SECTION 303
ASSEMBLY GROUP A

303.1 Assembly Group A. Assembly Group A occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, for the gathering of persons for purposes such as civic, social or religious functions; recreation, food or drink consumption or awaiting transportation.

303.1.1 Small buildings and tenant spaces. A building or tenant space used for assembly purposes with an occupant load of less than 50 persons shall be classified as a Group B occupancy.

303.1.2 Small assembly spaces. The following rooms and spaces shall not be classified as Assembly occupancies:

1. A room or space used for assembly purposes with an occupant load of less than 50 persons and accessory to another occupancy shall be classified as a Group B occupancy or as part of that occupancy.
2. A room or space used for assembly purposes that is less than 750 square feet (70 m²) in area and accessory to another occupancy shall be classified as a Group B occupancy or as part of that occupancy.

303.1.3 Associated with Group E occupancies. A room or space used for assembly purposes that is associated with a Group E occupancy is not considered a separate occupancy.

303.1.4 Accessory to places of religious worship. Accessory religious educational rooms and religious auditoriums with occupant loads of less than 100 per room or space are not considered separate occupancies.
303.1.5 Special amusement areas. Special amusement areas shall comply with Section 411.

303.2 Assembly Group A-1. Group A-1 occupancy includes assembly uses, usually with fixed seating, intended for the production and viewing of the performing arts or motion pictures including, but not limited to:

- Motion picture theaters
- Symphony and concert halls
- Television and radio studios admitting an audience
- Theaters

303.3 Assembly Group A-2. Group A-2 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for food and/or drink consumption including, but not limited to:

- Banquet halls
- Casinos (gaming areas)
- Nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities (including associated commercial kitchens)
- Taverns and bars

303.4 Assembly Group A-3. Group A-3 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for worship, recreation or amusement and other assembly uses not classified elsewhere in Group A including, but not limited to:

- Amusement arcades
- Art galleries
- Bowling alleys
- Community halls
- Courtrooms
- Dance halls (not including food or drink consumption)
- Exhibition halls
- Funeral parlors
- Greenhouses for the conservation and exhibition of plants that provide public access
- Gymnasiums (without spectator seating)
- Indoor swimming pools (without spectator seating)
- Indoor tennis courts (without spectator seating)
- Lecture halls
- Libraries
- Museums
- Places of religious worship
- Pool and billiard parlors
- Structures, without a commercial kitchen, used in agri-tourism activity as defined by S.C. Code Ann. 46-53-10(1)
- Waiting areas in transportation terminals

303.5 Assembly Group A-4. Group A-4 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for viewing of indoor sporting events and activities with spectator seating including, but not limited to:

- Arenas
- Skating rinks
- Swimming pools
- Tennis courts

303.6 Assembly Group A-5. Group A-5 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for participation in or viewing outdoor activities including, but not limited to:

- Amusement park structures
- Bleachers
- Grandstands
- Stadiums

SECTION 304
BUSINESS GROUP B

304.1 Business Group B. Business Group B occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, for office, professional or service-type transactions, including storage of records and accounts. Business occupancies shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Airport traffic control towers
- Ambulatory care facilities
- Animal hospitals, kennels and pounds
- Banks
- Barber and beauty shops
- Car wash
- Civic administration
- Clinic, outpatient
- Dry cleaning and laundries: pick-up and delivery stations and self-service
- Educational occupancies for students above the 12th grade including higher education laboratories
- Electronic data processing
- Food processing establishments and commercial kitchens not associated with restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities not more than 2,500 square feet (232 m²) in area
- Laboratories: testing and research
- Motor vehicle showrooms
- Post offices
- Print shops
- Professional services (architects, attorneys, dentists, physicians, engineers, etc.)
- Radio and television stations
- Telephone exchanges
- Training and skill development not in a school or academic program (this shall include, but not be limited to, tutoring centers, martial arts studios, gymnastics and similar uses regardless of the ages served, and where not classified as a Group A occupancy)
304.2 Airport traffic control towers. Airport traffic control towers shall comply with Section 412.2.

304.3 Ambulatory care facilities. Ambulatory care facilities shall comply with Section 422.

304.4 Higher education laboratories. Higher education laboratories shall comply with Section 428.

SECTION 305
EDUCATIONAL GROUP E

305.1 Educational Group E. Educational Group E occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, by six or more persons at any one time for educational purposes through the 12th grade.

305.1.1 Accessory to places of religious worship. Religious educational rooms and religious auditoriums, which are accessory to places of religious worship in accordance with Section 303.1.4 and have occupant loads of less than 100 per room or space, shall be classified as Group A-3 occupancies.

305.2 Group E, day care facilities. This group includes buildings and structures or portions thereof occupied by more than five children older than 2 1/2 years of age who receive educational, supervision or personal care services for fewer than 24 hours per day.

305.2.1 Within places of religious worship. Rooms and spaces within places of religious worship providing such day care during religious functions shall be classified as part of the primary occupancy.

305.2.2 Five or fewer children. A facility having five or fewer children receiving such day care shall be classified as part of the primary occupancy.

305.2.3 Five or fewer children in a dwelling unit. A facility such as the above within a dwelling unit and having five or fewer children receiving such day care shall be classified as a Group R-3 occupancy or shall comply with the South Carolina Residential Code.

305.3 Storm shelters in Group E occupancies. Storm shelters shall be provided for Group E occupancies where required by Section 423.5.

SECTION 306
FACTORY GROUP F

306.1 Factory Industrial Group F. Factory Industrial Group F occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, for assembling, disassembling, fabricating, finishing, manufacturing, packaging, repair or processing operations that are not classified as a Group H hazardous or Group S storage occupancy.

306.2 Moderate-hazard factory industrial, Group F-1. Factory industrial uses that are not classified as Factory Industrial F-2 Low Hazard shall be classified as F-1 Moderate Hazard and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Aircraft (manufacturing, not to include repair)
- Appliances
- Athletic equipment
- Automobiles and other motor vehicles
- Bakeries
- Beverages: over 16-percent alcohol content
- Bicycles
- Boats
- Brooms or brushes
- Business machines
- Cameras and photo equipment
- Canvas or similar fabric
- Carpets and rugs (includes cleaning)
- Clothing
- Construction and agricultural machinery
- Disinfectants
- Dry cleaning and dyeing
- Electric generation plants
- Electronics
- Energy storage systems (ESS) in dedicated use buildings
- Engines (including rebuilding)
- Food processing establishments and commercial kitchens not associated with restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities more than 2,500 square feet (232 m²) in area
- Furniture
- Hemp products
- Jute products
- Laundries
- Leather products
- Machinery
- Metals
- Millwork (sash and door)
- Motion pictures and television filming (without spectators)
- Musical instruments
- Optical goods
- Paper mills or products
- Photographic film
- Plastic products
- Printing or publishing
- Recreational vehicles
- Refuse incineration
- Shoes
- Soaps and detergents
- Textiles
- Tobacco
Section 306.2.1 Aircraft manufacturing facilities. Aircraft manufacturing facilities shall comply with Section 412.6.

Section 306.3 Low-hazard factory industrial, Group F-2. Factory industrial uses that involve the fabrication or manufacturing of noncombustible materials that during finishing, packing or processing do not involve a significant fire hazard shall be classified as F-2 occupancies and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Beverages: up to and including 16-percent alcohol content
- Brick and masonry
- Ceramic products
- Foundries
- Glass products
- Gypsum
- Ice
- Metal products (fabrication and assembly)

Section 307 High-Hazard Group H

[F] 307.1 High-hazard Group H. High-hazard Group H occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, that involves the manufacturing, processing, generation or storage of materials that constitute a physical or health hazard in quantities in excess of those allowed in control areas complying with Section 414, based on the maximum allowable quantity limits for control areas set forth in Tables 307.1(1) and 307.1(2).

Hazardous occupancies are classified in Groups H-1, H-2, H-3, H-4 and H-5 and shall be in accordance with this section, the requirements of Section 415 and the South Carolina Fire Code. Hazardous materials stored, or used on top of roofs or canopies, shall be classified as outdoor storage or use and shall comply with the South Carolina Fire Code.

[F] 307.1.1 Uses other than Group H. An occupancy that stores, uses or handles hazardous materials as described in one or more of the following items shall not be classified as Group H, but shall be classified as the occupancy that it most nearly resembles.

1. Buildings and structures occupied for the application of flammable finishes, provided that such buildings or areas conform to the requirements of Section 416 and the South Carolina Fire Code.
2. Wholesale and retail sales and storage of flammable and combustible liquids in mercantile occupancies conforming to the South Carolina Fire Code.
3. Closed piping system containing flammable or combustible liquids or gases utilized for the operation of machinery or equipment.
4. Cleaning establishments that utilize combustible liquid solvents having a flash point of 140°F (60°C) or higher in closed systems employing equipment listed by an approved testing agency, provided that this occupancy is separated from all other areas of the building by 1-hour fire barriers constructed in accordance with Section 707 or 1-hour horizontal assemblies constructed in accordance with Section 711, or both.
5. Cleaning establishments that utilize a liquid solvent having a flash point at or above 200°F (93°C).
7. Refrigeration systems.
8. The storage or utilization of materials for agricultural purposes on the premises.
9. Stationary storage battery systems installed in accordance with the South Carolina Fire Code.
10. Corrosive personal or household products in their original packaging used in retail display.
11. Commonly used corrosive building materials.
12. Buildings and structures occupied for aerosol product storage, aerosol cooking spray products or plastic aerosol 3 products shall be classified as Group S-1, provided that such buildings conform to the requirements of the South Carolina Fire Code.
13. Display and storage of nonflammable solid and nonflammable or noncombustible liquid hazardous materials in quantities not exceeding the maximum allowable quantity per control area in Group M or S occupancies complying with Section 414.2.5.
14. The storage of black powder, smokeless propellant and small arms primers in Groups M and R-3 and special industrial explosive devices in Groups B, F, M and S, provided such storage conforms to the quantity limits and requirements prescribed in the South Carolina Fire Code.
15. Stationary fuel cell power systems installed in accordance with the South Carolina Fire Code.
16. Capacitor energy storage systems in accordance with the South Carolina Fire Code.
17. Group B higher education laboratory occupancies complying with Section 428 and Chapter 38 of the South Carolina Fire Code.
18. Distilling or brewing of beverages conforming to the requirements of the South Carolina Fire Code.