

USE OR OCCUPANCY

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SECTION 302
CLASSIFICATION

302.1 General. Structures or portions of structures shall be classified with respect to occupancy in one or more of the groups listed below. A room or space that is intended to be occupied at different times for different purposes shall comply with all of the requirements that are applicable to each of the purposes for which the room or space will be occupied. Structures with multiple occupancies or uses shall comply with Section 508. Where a structure is proposed for a purpose that is not specifically provided for in this code, such structure shall be classified in the group that the occupancy most nearly resembles, according to the fire safety and relative hazard involved.

1. Assembly (see Section 303): Groups A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4 and A-5
2. Business (see Section 304): Group B
3. Educational (see Section 305): Group E
4. Factory and Industrial (see Section 306): Groups F-1 and F-2
5. High Hazard (see Section 307): Groups H-1, H-2, H-3, H-4 and H-5
6. Institutional (see Section 308): Groups I-1, I-2, I-3 and I-4
7. Mercantile (see Section 309): Group M
8. Residential (see Section 310): Groups R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4
9. Storage (see Section 311): Groups S-1 and S-2
10. Utility and Miscellaneous (see Section 312): Group U

Q: What occupancy classification would be appropriate for a drive-up service area such as drive-up windows at a bank, food pick-up services and similar facilities where the service area is covered? Would a covered passenger loading area (porte cochere) at the entrance to a hotel, convention center, place of worship or similar facility be classified as an occupancy?

A: Roofed customer service areas where cars are temporarily stopped solely for immediate service and covered vehicle passenger loading areas would be classified the same as the major use. This is always contingent on vehicles not being parked for other than immediate service. Where parking is occurring, a classification of Group S-2 should be considered. [3-1]

Q: A question has been posed by one of my plan reviewers as to the proper occupancy classification of a proposed building to be used as a manufacturing plant of semiconductor components. I have in the past classified such a building as a Group F-1 occupancy. However, because the amount of hazardous materials, including toxic materials, is in excess of the quantities listed in Table 307.1(1) or 307.1(2), classification as a Group H occupancy is perhaps more appropriate. Please provide me with some guidance regarding this matter.

A: The provisions of Section 302.1 state, "Where a structure is proposed for a purpose which is not specifically provided for in this code, such structure shall be classified in the group which the occupancy most nearly resembles, according to the fire safety and relative hazard involved." Thus, the building official has specific authority to apply reasonable judgment in considering the proper occupancy classification for a specific use.

A semiconductor chip production area includes, by its nature, the use of hazardous production materials including flammable liquids, corrosive liquids, and toxic and flammable gases. The area where HPM are used and exceed the quantities in Tables 307.1 (1) and 307.1(2) should be considered a Group H-5 occupancy. Requirements for construction are found both in the *International Building Code* (IBC) (Section 415.8) and in the *International Fire Code* (IFC). [3-2]

Q: When reviewing a shell building, whether a multi-tenant or a single-tenant shell, where

the builders are unsure of who the future occupants will be, they will provide a proposed occupancy classification or multiple classifications. If they do not provide a future proposed occupancy, how does one review the plans for a worst case scenario for exiting, construction type, allowable area, emergency lighting and accessibility? Can a tenant space be left without an occupancy classification?

Once the actual tenants are known, does one then have to re-review the building based on the actual occupancy classification to verify that it still complies with all life-safety requirements, fire area, fire barrier separation and other code provisions?

A. The construction of a shell building that is to be eventually occupied by multiple tenants must still be assigned an occupancy group(s) designation for the review and approval of the initial building permit for construction. Each portion of the building must be assigned a classification. The versatility of the design of the base (shell) building must be such that all code requirements are met. If a subsequent lease is made with a tenant in an occupancy other than that approved in the original permit, a permit to remodel an existing building should be required. [3-3]

Q. We have a private single-family dwelling that was constructed by the owners in a Gothic-style architecture. The owners are conducting guided tours through their home and are charging a fee for the tour. The home is approximately 3,000 square feet. Does the fact that they are taking people through their house and charging a fee put them into an A-3 Assembly occupancy, or a B Business if less than 50 people?

A. Neither the *International Building Code* (IBC) nor the *International Residential Code* (IRC) limit the size of a single-family dwelling. Some dwellings are extremely large. Some may contain ball rooms capable of accommodating far more than 50 occupants. Many basements, even in homes of modest size, are often finished and used as one large space for entertainment purposes. Even small homes may accommodate more than 50 people at various family events. All of these conditions would fall under the umbrella of a single-family dwelling. Therefore, the fact that more than 50 people are present during tours of the house does not automatically constitute a reason to regulate it as a Group A occupancy.

However, the fact that tours are conducted in the building for business purposes—and the website appears to indicate that art and craft classes are being held—may mean that, at some point, it might become reasonable to regulate the structure as a Group R and Group B or Group A mixed occupancy. But at what specific frequency of events or occupant load this becomes reasonable is not clearly defined in the code. As such, only the building official can make this determination. Note that local zoning requirements may also have an impact on how the building is regulated. [3-4]

Q. Are kitchen areas that serve assembly areas considered part of the assembly occupancy?

A. Yes. Any kitchen that exists for the purpose of preparation and serving of food to an assembly area is typically included as part of the assembly occupancy when determining occupancy classification. This is the same as a toilet room, bathroom, locker room, corridor or stairway. These areas are "ancillary" to the primary function of the structure. They are there to support the use of the building as a restaurant. Please note that Table 1004.1 provides occupant load factors based on function of the space. There are different factors for the dining spaces and kitchen spaces in the restaurant. [3-5]

Q. What would the Use and Occupancy classification be for baseball field dugout structures? In addition to being the dugout, there is also a storage closet for field maintenance equipment. The structures do not have heating or cooling. The structures are used by high school baseball players/coaches and school district maintenance staff.

A. Although the dugouts are the only structures, they are part of the baseball facility. Because they are for participation in outdoor activities, for height and area purposes they would be classified as Group A-5. Because the entire facility has more than 50 occupants (i.e., field, dugouts, bleachers) this cannot be a Group B or Group U occupancy. [3-6]

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 func-

tions; recreation, food or drink consumption; or awaiting transportation.

Exceptions:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. A room or space used for assembly purposes that is less than 750 square feet (70 m²) in area and is accessory to another occupancy shall be classified as a Group B occupancy or as part of that occupancy.
4. Assembly areas that are accessory to Group E occupancies are not considered separate occupancies except when applying the assembly occupancy requirements of Chapter 11.
5. Accessory religious educational rooms and religious auditoriums with occupant loads of less than 100 are not considered separate occupancies.

Assembly occupancies shall include the following:

A-1 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

A-2 Assembly uses intended for food and/or drink consumption including, but not limited to:

- Banquet halls
- Night clubs
- Restaurants
- Taverns and bars

A-3 Assembly uses intended for worship, recreation or amusement and other assembly uses not classified else-where 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
- 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 billard parlors
- Waiting areas in transportation terminals

A-4 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

A-5 Assembly uses intended for participation in or viewing outdoor activities including, but not limited to:

- Amusement park structures
- Bleachers
- Grandstands
- Stadiums

Q Is it the intent of Exception 3 of Section 303.1 to state that assembly areas that exceed 750 square feet are to be treated as Group A assembly spaces and when located in a building with other occupancies, such as an office building, that they are then subject to Section 508, Mixed Uses? Conversely, is it the intent that assembly areas that are 750 square feet or less are to be considered accessory areas, regardless if such assembly areas exceed 10 percent of the building area? For example, would the following assembly areas be considered accessory areas and not be subject to classification as a Group A occupancy?

1. A single-story office building of 10,000 square feet has a conference room that is 800 square feet (assembly area is less than 10 percent of building area, but more than 750 square feet).
2. An office building of 1,200 square feet has a conference room that is 749 square feet (assembly area is less than 750 square feet but exceeds 10 percent of building area).

3. An office building of 3,000 square feet with a conference room that is 1,000 square feet.

A:

1. The assembly space in this office building exceeds the limit of Exception 3, and therefore must be considered a Group A-3 assembly occupancy. As it is less than 10 percent of the floor area of the story, it can be considered an accessory occupancy based on Section 508.2.
2. This assembly space, assuming it is accessory to the office use, is considered a Group B occupancy based on Exception 3. As such, Section 508 does not apply. Even though it exceeds the 10 percent area limitation of Section 508 for accessory occupancies, the exception in Section 303.1 takes precedence. None of the mixed occupancy provisions of Section 508 apply. Nonetheless, the occupant load of the space is based on the function (assembly) in accordance with Table 1004.1 and not the occupancy.
3. This assembly space does not meet Exception 3 and therefore is a Group A-3 assembly occupancy. It also exceeds 10 percent of the floor area; therefore, under Section 508 it cannot be regulated as an accessory occupancy either. This building will need to be addressed as a mixed occupancy building with either separated or nonseparated occupancies. [3-7]

Q: We are designing an elementary school of Type IIB construction. It is a mixed occupancy building. In Section 303.1, Exception 4 states that assembly areas accessory to Group E occupancies are not considered separate occupancies. Does this mean the 10 percent floor area limitation for accessory occupancies in Section 508 does not apply? Does this further mean that the floor area calculation will not be governed by the stricter Group A occupancy areas? We have been told that the gym will be used after hours by organizations not associated with the school. If this is the case, does Exception 2 still apply?

A: An assembly space such as a gymnasium, cafeteria or library that is located in an educational facility is indeed permitted to be considered part of the Group E occupancy designation even though it is more than 10 percent of the floor area. As such, it would be considered under the provisions of Group E for height and area purposes of Table 503.

Because both the classrooms and the gymnasium are Group E occupancies, the mixed occupancy provisions of Section 508 do not apply. However, the means of egress for the assembly areas within a Group E occupancy should be considered in light of the requirements of assembly spaces in Chapter 10.

If, on the other hand, the use of such an assembly space is not limited to the students and those associated with the school, such spaces must be regulated as Group A-3 occupancies. Insofar as this facility will be used by others outside of school functions, it must either be designed as a nonseparated or separated mixed-use facility. [3-8]

Q: With respect to a Group A-3 classification how is "religious function" to be interpreted? Does the Group A-3 category include multi-purpose rooms where for the majority of the time the space is used as a sanctuary, and on occasions as a meeting area or used to hold a spaghetti dinner? Our fire marshal is classifying our space as a Group A-2 restaurant because the plans show that tables and chairs would be used on some occasions. The addition does include a small kitchen area to be used by the parishioners.

A: Section 302.1 does state that structures that are occupied at different times for different purposes must comply with the requirements of each use intended for the space. It needs to be determined if the space can be considered a Group A-2 when used for the spaghetti supper and an A-3 when used for worship. The code does list community hall as a Group A-3 occupancy. Can you eat in a community hall? As the building is less than 12,000 square feet but more than 5,000 square feet, classification of the space as Group A-2 versus Group A-3 will also determine whether an automatic sprinkler system is required. The code intends such facilities as community halls and fellowship halls to be classified as Group A-3 occupancies even though there is the occasional spaghetti dinner or wedding reception where food is served. If, on the other hand the religious facility decides to run a daily soup kitchen in the facility, then a shift to a Group A-2 classification would be appropriate. [3-9]

Q: What is the occupancy classification of a bowling center, and how is the occupant load determined?

A: Buildings housing bowling alleys are normally classified as Group A-3 occupancies. In

establishing the total occupant load, the area of the alley may be disregarded. Table 1004.1.1 states that for "Bowling centers, allow 5 persons for each lane including 15 feet of runway, and for additional areas" use 7 square feet net per person. However, if the building contains a restaurant or cocktail lounge, the occupant load in such restaurant or cocktail lounge areas should be based on 15 square feet net per person. [3-10]

Q• I have been working with a university laboratory/classroom building on the local university campus. This project involves an eight-story addition (approximately 100,000 square feet) that will be added onto an existing eight-story building. Located within this addition is a single large lecture hall (seating 175 students) along with numerous other offices, teaching labs, research labs and work/prep areas. The interpretation of occupancy has been questioned regarding this building. I would appreciate your interpretation as to the occupancy or occupancies in which you would place this building.

A• A lecture hall with an occupant load of 175 would be considered a Group A-3 occupancy in accordance with Section 303.1. Offices, laboratories and rooms used for educational purposes beyond the 12th grade with less than 50 occupants in any room and similar uses would be considered Group B occupancies in accordance with Section 304.1. [3-11]

Q• What occupancy group would you designate a dance studio for classes with an enrollment limit of 15 children per class between ages 5 and 15? The dance room is 40 feet by 60 feet. Recitals will be held four times a year.

A• The function of this facility would be considered an assembly use, falling under the Group A-3 classification. Exception 1 to Section 303.1 does permit assembly occupancies to be classified as Group B (Business) if the total occupant load is less than 50 persons. Note that, although the indicated class size may be less than 50, the design occupant load must reflect a worst case scenario. Because recitals usually include an audience sitting in chairs, an occupant factor of 7 square feet per person (Table 1004.1.1) must be applied to the appropriate area. This table may be applied on a space by space evaluation, subject to the function of individual spaces in the dance studio. Note as well that, although the classes may consist of children, this does not warrant a Group E occupancy classification. [3-12]

Q• In Section 303.1 there are three exceptions to the Assembly Occupancy classifications allowing for classification as Group B. Do these exceptions still apply for tenant spaces that include the sale of alcoholic beverages? I understand this exception was based on mom and pop stores, small delis and small fast-food facilities.

A• We understand your situation involves a building intended to be used as a wine tasting and wine sales establishment. It is a separate building at a small winery where people can tour the winery and then stop at this building to sample the wines. If this building (or in another situation a tenant space in a larger building) complies with either Exception 1, 2 or 3 of Section 303.1, then it can be classified as a Group B occupancy. The sale of alcoholic beverages does not disqualify any business from using the exceptions to be classified as other than Group A. Furthermore, a use being listed as an example in one of the Group A divisions does not prevent use of these exceptions.

Any building or tenant space (including a small night club, tavern, bar or pool/billiard parlor with alcoholic services) can be classified as a Business Group B occupancy. The key, as you have correctly noted, is how the design occupant load is calculated and whether it is less than 50 or not. [3-13]

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 health 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
- Electronic data processing