

Study Session

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2009 IFC Section 202, pages 22 – 27 Occupancy Classification, and IBC Chapters 3 and 5

OBJECTIVE: To understand how the uses associated with a building or premises are classified as occupancy groups and how occupancy classification is used in the administration of the *International Fire Code*.

REFERENCE: Section 202, pages 22 through 27, 2009 *International Fire Code*; and Chapters 3 and 5, 2009 *International Building Code*.

- KEY POINTS:**
- Why are uses divided into occupancy groups?
 - How does an occupancy classification affect the treatment of a use in the International Codes?
 - What are the ten major occupancy categories?
 - Why are some occupancy groups divided into subcategories known as divisions?
 - What are some of the qualifiers that change a use from a lower hazard occupancy to a higher-hazard occupancy?
 - How can the occupancy groups be remembered and easily located in the *International Fire Code*?
 - Which types of activities are considered assembly uses? What is their general classification?
 - How are small assembly uses classified when they are accessory to a different occupancy?
 - What is the classification for restaurants and cafes? Night clubs and theaters? Churches, conference rooms and libraries? Arenas and grandstands?
 - What is the use that is most typically classified as a B occupancy? What are some other uses classified as Group B?
 - Which age range for occupants usually falls into the Group E category?
 - Which types of day care may be classified as Group E occupancies?
 - What occupancy group includes manufacturing operations? What are the characteristics that determine whether a use is classified as a Division 1 or a Division 2?
 - How do the amounts of hazardous materials affect the occupancy classification? Where can the qualifying amounts of various types of materials be found in the *International Fire Code*?

- KEY POINTS:**
- (Cont'd)**
- Which occupancies have requirements to address physical hazards? Health hazards? Semiconductor fabrication facilities?
 - What are the characteristics of occupants typically found in Group I occupancies?
 - How are uses classified when the liberties of the occupants are restrained? What other types of conditions are applied?
 - Which types of institutional occupancies may be governed by the *International Residential Code*?
 - What type of building is classified as Group M? What other types of code provisions may apply?
 - How are residential occupancies classified? Why do some R occupancies have more stringent requirements than others?
 - What characteristics are used to divide Group S occupancies into Divisions 1 and 2? How may a motor vehicle repair garage be classified as an S occupancy?
 - What is a utility occupancy? How does its classification differ from that of other occupancies?
 - How does the *International Building Code* deal with more than one use or occupancy in the same building? What are incidental and nonseparated uses?
 - What options are available for separating multiple occupancies in the same building? How can a building house multiple occupancies with no separations required between occupancies?
 - How does occupancy classification fit into the *International Building Code's* provisions for determining allowable height?

Code Text: *For the purposes of this code, certain occupancies are defined as follows [IFC]:*
(See IFC Section 202 for full definition.)

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 (IBC).

Discussion and Commentary: Uses are categorized into occupancies according to risk factors such as the vulnerability of the occupants, as in infant care facilities, homes for the elderly or hospitals; or the hazards that might be present because of the uses or type and amount of materials housed in the occupancy, such as compressed gas transfilling facilities, flammable liquids storage facilities or businesses that handle highly toxic materials. Occupancy groups are one part of an overall system that is established in the *International Building Code* to determine the allowable area and height of buildings and other requirements based upon the use and character of the building or space (Occupancy), the degree of passive fire resistance built into the building (Type of Construction) and the requirements for fire protection systems such as automatic sprinkler or fire alarm systems.

- A Assembly
- B Business
- E Educational
- F Factory
- H Hazardous
- I Institutional
- M Mercantile
- R Residential
- S Storage
- U Utility



The classification of the occupancy is an important skill in applying the requirements of the *International Fire Code*.