

# International Building Code Chapter 34 Change of Occupancy

***This sheet is intended as an overall guide to the building code issues governing a change of occupancy in a building or tenant space.***

In all buildings, each space is classified by use, or **occupancy** category found in the building code. Buildings are then provided with structural and life-safety elements for that particular use (or uses). When the occupancy of a space changes, the building design must be re-evaluated for that use. Examples of a change of occupancy would be changing an office to a retail store or a restaurant. The following is a general outline of that process (found in chapter 34 of the International Building Code), but it is not intended to be a design guide. A licensed architect or other design professional is normally required for a change of occupancy. If you are unsure if your project is a change of occupancy, please contact the Building Department or your designer.

The three basic components of a change of occupancy evaluation are: **1) structural evaluation, 2) life safety evaluation and 3) ADA accessibility.**

## **Structural evaluation (3408.4)**

The owner or applicant must have a structural analysis of the existing building made to determine adequacy of structural systems for proposed change of occupancy. The existing building shall be capable of supporting the minimum load requirements specified in this section.

## **Life safety evaluation (3412)**

An architect or other qualified professional must provide an evaluation of the general safety, means of egress and life safety elements in the building and determine any upgrades that are required. The code is quite flexible as to the exact upgrades and so the designer normally works with the owner to determine the best changes for the business or building owner.

## **ADA accessibility (3411) for a change of occupancy\***

Existing buildings, or portions thereof, that undergo a change of group or occupancy must have all of the following accessible features:

1. At least one accessible building entrance (ramp, door width, etc...).
2. At least one accessible route from an accessible building entrance to primary function areas. (For example in an office space, all offices must be accessible.)
3. Signage complying with Section 1110. (Parking signs, exits, directional signs, etc...)
4. Accessible parking, where parking is being provided.
5. At least one accessible passenger loading zone, when loading zones are provided.
6. At least one accessible route connecting accessible parking and accessible passenger loading zones to an accessible entrance.

***\*Please note these are only requirements for a change of use with no other work being done. If any remodeling or alterations will be done, additional upgrades to bathrooms and other spaces may be required under 3411.5 thru 3411.9.4 of the International Building Code.***

## **Procedures for Change of Occupancy or Use**

1. Hire a person or firm familiar with the building and land use codes to inspect the building and prepare plans which show compliance with current codes for the proposed new use. These plans may need to be prepared by a licensed architect or engineer, and must clearly show existing conditions and proposed alterations. Submittal Requirements are available through the Permit Center on line or in the Permit Center.
2. Schedule a Pre-application meeting. At this informal meeting, you can present the project to city staff and receive information concerning land use and building permit requirements as well as the forms and documents that will be needed at the time of application.
3. Submit applications for approval of the proposed change of use as determined in the pre-application meeting. (Building and concurrency permits are required in nearly all cases.) The request must describe in detail both the current/previous use and the proposed new use. Include complete sets of construction drawings and site plans for each request/application. You must pay a plan review deposit at the time of application.
4. City staff in the building and land use departments will then review the plans. When they have verified compliance with the various codes and appropriate fees have been paid, the building permit will be issued, authorizing the work to commence.
5. Call for inspections. After final approval inspections have verified code compliance, the City will issue a new Certificate of Occupancy for its new use. The building may not be occupied before the Certificate of Occupancy is issued, approving the building for occupancy with its new use.

**TABLE 3412.7  
SUMMARY SHEET — BUILDING CODE**

Existing occupancy: _____	Proposed occupancy: _____
Year building was constructed: _____	Number of stories: _____ Height in feet: _____
Type of construction: _____	Area per floor: _____
Percentage of open perimeter increase: _____%	
Completely suppressed:     Yes _____ No _____	Corridor wall rating: _____
Compartmentation:         Yes _____ No _____	Required door closers:     Yes _____ No _____
Fire-resistance rating of vertical opening enclosures: _____	
Type of HVAC system: _____, serving number of floors: _____	
Automatic fire detection:    Yes _____ No _____	Type and location: _____
Fire alarm system:         Yes _____ No _____	Type: _____
Smoke control:             Yes _____ No _____	Type: _____
Adequate exit routes:       Yes _____ No _____	Dead ends: _____ Yes _____ No _____
Maximum exit access travel distance: _____	Elevator controls:         Yes _____ No _____
Means of egress emergency lighting:   Yes _____ No _____	Mixed occupancies:       Yes _____ No _____

SAFETY PARAMETERS	FIRE SAFETY (FS)	MEANS OF EGRESS (ME)	GENERAL SAFETY (GS)
3412.6.1 Building Height 3412.6.2 Building Area 3412.6.3 Compartmentation			
3412.6.4 Tenant and Dwelling Unit Separations 3412.6.5 Corridor Walls 3412.6.6 Vertical Openings			
3412.6.7 HVAC Systems 3412.6.8 Automatic Fire Detection 3412.6.9 Fire Alarm Systems			
3412.6.10 Smoke Control 3412.6.11 Means of Egress Capacity 3412.6.12 Dead Ends	* * * * * * * * * * * *		
3412.6.13 Maximum Exit Access Travel Distance 3412.6.14 Elevator Control 3412.6.15 Means of Egress Emergency Lighting	* * * *  * * * *		
3412.6.16 Mixed Occupancies 3412.6.17 Automatic Sprinklers 3412.6.18 Standpipes 3412.6.19 Incidental Accessory Occupancy		* * * * ÷ 2 =	
<b>Building score — total value</b>			

\* \* \* \*No applicable value to be inserted.

**TABLE 3412.9  
EVALUATION FORMULAS<sup>a</sup>**

FORMULA	T.3410.7	T.3410.8	SCORE	PASS	FAIL
FS-MFS ≥ 0	_____ (FS)	- _____ (MFS) =	_____	_____	_____
ME-MME ≥ 0	_____ (ME)	- _____ (MME) =	_____	_____	_____
GS-MGS ≥ 0	_____ (GS)	- _____ (MGS) =	_____	_____	_____

- a. FS = Fire Safety                   MFS = Mandatory Fire Safety  
 ME = Means of Egress               MME = Mandatory Means of Egress  
 GS = General Safety                 MGS = Mandatory General Safety