



2019 National Building Code (Alberta Edition)

Classifications of Buildings and the Types of Occupancies Allowed within Buildings

Classification of Buildings

Buildings are classified (e.g. Group D, E, A, B, F, etc.) by the building designer to allow specific types of occupancies (e.g. offices, restaurants, gyms, etc.) however not all building classifications will allow all types of occupancies. For example if your building has been classified as a “Group D Business Personal Services Occupancy” you are not allowed to occupy the building with more restrictive occupancies. (e.g. Group E, A, F, etc.).

Exception

The building code does allow exceptions for more restrictive occupancies to be contained with a less restrictive classification of building. This is allowed where the combined area of all more restrictive occupancy is not more than 10% of the floor area of the storey in which it is located. The other exception to this rule is that these 10% occupancies cannot include Group F Division 1 or 2 occupancies (industrial occupancies).

Changing the Classification of a Building

It is possible for a building owner to have a building re-classified and changed to a more restrictive occupancy however a registered professional (engineer or architect) would be required to review the existing building and provide in writing to the City Building Inspections Department the changes needed to occur to bring the building up to code. Once the approval has been given the owner would be required to make the changes to allow reclassification of the building.

Problems that may occur with changing the Classification of a Building

1. Separations Between Suites - The demising walls between the bays have not been designed for the correct fire resistance rating. (e.g. Group A occupancies required a 2 hour separation from other types of occupancies).
2. Lack of Parking – If the building was originally designed for a specific type of use or intensity and then after this intensity changes a lack of parking is one of the first problems that appears. It is important that the intended uses for the building will meet the Building Code requirements regarding classification and the classification will in turn meet the parking requirements for the classification.

You Need to Know the Limitations of the Building when Selling or Leasing Bays

1. Building Code – What types of occupancies has the building been designed for?
2. Land Use Bylaw – What land use district (i.e. zone) are you in and what are the permitted or discretionary uses?
3. Is there enough parking allowed on this site for this type of occupancy?

Major occupancy means the principal *occupancy* for which a *building* or part thereof is used or intended to be used, and shall be deemed to include the subsidiary *occupancies* that are an integral part of the principal *occupancy*. The *major occupancy* classifications used in this Code are as follows:

- A1 *Assembly occupancies* intended for the production and viewing of the performing arts
- A2 *Assembly occupancies* not elsewhere classified in Group A
- A3 *Assembly occupancies* of the arena type
- A4 *Assembly occupancies* in which the occupants are gathered in the open air
- B1 *Detention occupancies*
- B2 *Treatment occupancies*
- B3 *Care occupancies*
- C *Residential occupancies*
- D *Business and personal services occupancies*
- E *Mercantile occupancies*
- F1 *High-hazard industrial occupancies*
- F2 *Medium-hazard industrial occupancies*
- F3 *Low-hazard industrial occupancies*

A-3.1.2.1.(1)Major Occupancy Classification

The following are examples of the major occupancy classifications described in Table [3.1.2.1.](#):

- **Group A, Division 1**
 - Motion picture theatres
 - Opera houses
 - Television studios admitting a viewing audience
 - Theatres, including experimental theatres
- **Group A, Division 2**
 - Art galleries
 - Auditoria
 - Bowling alleys
 - Churches and similar places of worship
 - Clubs, non-residential
 - Community halls
 - Courtrooms
 - Dance halls
 - Daycare facilities
 - Exhibition halls (other than classified in Group E)
 - Gymnasias
 - Lecture halls
 - Libraries
 - Licensed beverage establishments
 - Museums
 - Passenger stations and depots
 - Recreational piers
 - Restaurants
 - Schools and colleges, non-residential
 - Undertaking premises
- **Group A, Division 3**
 - Arenas
 - Indoor swimming pools, with or without spectator seating
 - Rinks

- **Group A, Division 4**
 - Amusement park structures (not elsewhere classified)
 - Bleachers
 - Grandstands
 - Reviewing stands
 - Stadia
- **Group B, Division 1**
 - Jails
 - Penitentiaries
 - Police stations with detention quarters
 - Prisons
 - Psychiatric hospitals with detention quarters
 - Reformatories with detention quarters
- **Group B, Division 2**
 - Care facilities with treatment
 - Convalescent /recovery/rehabilitation centres with treatment
 - Hospices with treatment
 - Hospitals
 - Infirmaries
 - Nursing homes with treatment
 - Psychiatric hospitals without detention quarters
 - Respite centres with treatment
- **Group B, Division 3**
 - Assisted/supportive living facilities
 - Care facilities without treatment
 - Children's custodial homes
 - Convalescent/recovery/rehabilitation centres without treatment
 - Group homes
 - Hospices without treatment
 - Nursing homes without treatment
 - Reformatories without detention quarters
 - Respite centres without treatment
- **Group C**
 - Apartments
 - Boarding houses
 - Clubs, residential
 - Colleges, residential
 - Convents
 - Dormitories
 - Family day homes/group family child care homes
 - Hotels
 - Houses
 - Lodging houses
 - Monasteries
 - Motels
 - Schools, residential
- **Group D**
 - Banks
 - Barber and hairdressing shops
 - Beauty parlours
 - Dental offices
 - Dry cleaning establishments, self-service, not using flammable or explosive solvents or cleaners
 - Laundries, self-service
 - Medical offices
 - Offices
 - Police stations without detention quarters
 - Radio stations
 - Small tool and appliance rental and service establishments

- **Group E**
 - Department stores
 - Exhibition halls
 - Markets
 - Shops
 - Stores
 - Supermarkets
- **Group F, Division 1**
 - Bulk plants for flammable liquids
 - Bulk storage warehouses for hazardous substances
 - Cereal mills
 - Chemical manufacturing or processing plants
 - Distilleries
 - Dry cleaning plants
 - Feed mills
 - Flour mills
 - Grain elevators
 - Lacquer factories
 - Mattress factories
 - Paint, varnish and pyroxylin product factories
 - Rubber processing plants
 - Spray painting operations
 - Waste paper processing plants
- **Group F, Division 2**
 - Aircraft hangars
 - Box factories
 - Candy plants
 - Cold storage plants
 - Dry cleaning establishments not using flammable or explosive solvents or cleaners
 - Electrical substations
 - Factories
 - Freight depots
 - Helicopter landing areas on roofs
 - Laboratories
 - Laundries, except self-service
 - Mattress factories
 - Planing mills
 - Printing plants
 - Repair garages
 - Salesrooms
 - Service stations
 - Storage rooms
 - Television studios not admitting a viewing audience
 - Warehouses
 - Wholesale rooms
 - Woodworking factories
 - Workshops
- **Group F, Division 3**
 - Creameries
 - Factories
 - Laboratories
 - Power plants
 - Salesrooms
 - Sample display rooms
 - Storage garages, including open air parking garages
 - Storage rooms
 - Warehouses
 - Workshops

Assembly occupancy means the *occupancy* or the use of a *building*, or part thereof, by a gathering of persons for civic, political, travel, religious, social, educational, recreational or like purposes, or for the consumption of food or drink.

Detention occupancy (Group B1) means the *occupancy* by persons who are restrained from or are Incapable of evacuating to a safe location without the assistance of another person because of security measures not under their control.

Treatment occupancy (Group B2) means the *occupancy* or use of a *building* or part thereof for the Provision of treatment, and where overnight accommodation is available to facilitate the treatment. (See Appendix A.)

Treatment means the provision of medical or other health-related intervention to persons, where the administration or lack of administration of these interventions may render them in capable of evacuating to a safe location without the assistance of another person. (See Appendix A.)

Care occupancy (Group B3) means the *occupancy* or use of a *building* or part thereof where *care* is provided to residents.

Care means the provision of services other than *treatment* by or through care facility Management to residents who require these services because of cognitive, physical or behavioural limitations.

Residential occupancy (Group C) means the *occupancy* or use of a *building* or part thereof by persons for whom sleeping accommodation is provided but who are not harboured or detained to receive medical care or treatment or are not involuntarily detained.

Business and personal services occupancy (Group D) means the *occupancy* or use of a *building* or part thereof for the transaction of business or the rendering or receiving of professional or personal services.

Mercantile occupancy (Group E) means the *occupancy* or use of a *building* or part thereof for the displaying or selling of retail goods, wares or merchandise.

High-hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 1) means an *industrial occupancy* containing sufficient quantities of highly *combustible* and flammable or explosive materials which, because of their inherent characteristics, constitute a special fire hazard.

Medium-hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 2) means an *industrial occupancy* in which the *combustible* content is more than 50 kg/m² or 1 200 MJ/m² of *floor area* and not classified as a *high-hazard industrial occupancy*.

Low-hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 3) means an *industrial occupancy* in which the *combustible* content is not more than 50 kg/m² or 1 200 MJ/m² of *floor area*.