

# OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATIONS AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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**Disciplines:** Fire & Life Safety

**History:**

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**PURPOSE:** To provide clarification on Occupancy Classifications and Load Factors for community college construction projects under the jurisdiction of the Division of the State Architect (DSA).

**Background:** The building code analysis for the project must reflect the occupancy classifications assigned and justify the construction types and use of areas shown. For the purposes of applying the mixed use and occupancy provisions of Section 508, the design options may include:

- Accessory uses
- Non separated uses,
- Separated uses, or
- A combination of the above.
- Incidental uses

(For definitions of “net” and “gross” see CBC Chapters 2 and 10).

**OCCUPANCIES AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS:** The following occupancy classifications will be assigned to the community colleges uses indicated.

## 1. CLASSROOMS:

- 1.1 General education classrooms:** Shall be classified as a Group “B” occupancy, with an occupant load factor of 20 (net).
- 1.2 Classrooms with occupant loads of 50 or more:** Shall be classified as Group “A-3.”
- 1.3 Science classrooms:** Where hazardous materials in exempt quantities are used or stored, shall be classified as a Group “B” occupancy, with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).
- 1.4 Science labs/control areas:** Exceeding the exempt amounts of hazardous materials, shall be classified as Group “H” occupancy, with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).
- 1.5 Science labs:** With laboratory suites **where scientific research is being conducted**, shall be classified as a Group “L” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).
- 1.6 Lecture halls (including stepped or ramped areas):** With an occupant load of 50 or more, shall be classified as Group “A-3” occupancy. Apply an occupant load factor of 20 (net) in areas without fixed seating. In areas with fixed seating, the occupant load is based on the number of seats, plus one for the instructor.
- 1.7 Cosmetology, dental, and nursing classrooms:** Where exempt quantities of hazardous materials as determined per CBC Tables 307.1(1) & 307.1(2) are stored or

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used, the classroom shall be classified as Group “B” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).

- 1.8 **Culinary arts classrooms:** Where food is prepared and later distributed for sale, shall be classified as Group “F-1” occupancy. The occupant load factor shall be 50 (net).
- 1.9 **Vocational shops for woodworking, auto, metal, and welding:** Shall be individually assessed based on the activities within the shops and the quantities of hazardous materials used and stored. The occupant load factor shall be 50 (net).
2. **GYMNASIUMS:**
  - 2.1 **Gymnasiums, including practice gymnasiums, or exercise rooms that do not include spectator seating:** An occupancy classification of Group “A-3” shall be assigned. The occupant load factor shall be 50 (gross) where the area is not used for other purposes beyond physical education.
  - 2.2 **An indoor gymnasium with spectator seating:** Shall be classified as Group “A-4”. Where bleachers (telescoping or fixed) are installed, the occupant load shall be calculated at one person for each 18 inches of seating length (See CBC 1004.4). The open area(s) beyond the bleachers shall use an occupant load factor of 7 (net). The combined occupant loads shall be used to determine the required number of exits and minimum exit widths, and the posting of the maximum occupant load signage.
  - 2.3 **Gymnasium combined with a raised platform or stage:** The area without fixed seating shall be assigned an occupant load factor of 7 (net). The area shall be considered “mixed use” and the most restrictive requirements would apply to the design.
  - 2.4 **Raised platforms and stages:** Shall use an occupant load factor of 15 (net) per CBC, Table 1004.1.2.
  - 2.5 **Locker rooms:** Shall be classified as Group “B” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 50 (gross).
3. **WEIGHT ROOMS, AEROBICS ROOMS, DANCE ROOMS AND OTHER AREAS WITH SIMILAR USES:** An occupancy classification of “A-3” shall be assigned with occupant load factor of 50 (gross).
4. **THEATERS and AUDITORIUMS:**
  - 4.1 **Auditoriums with fixed seating:** An occupancy classification of Group “A-1” shall be assigned where there is fixed seating. The occupant load shall be determined by counting the number of fixed seats or per CBC 1004.4.
  - 4.2 **Auditoriums without fixed seating:** May include occupant classifications of Group “A-1” depending on the use. An occupant load factor of 7 (net) will be used to determine the occupant load and exiting requirements.
  - 4.3 **Stages and raised platforms:** Shall have an occupant load based upon the occupant load factor of 15 (net) per Table 1004.1.1.

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**OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATIONS AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS FOR  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES****5. CAFETERIAS:**

- 5.1 Dining areas:** Shall be classified as Group “A-2” and shall have an occupant load factor calculated using CBC section 1004.1.2, applying an occupant load factor of 15 (net). Where fixed seating is provided, the occupant load shall be determined per CBC section 1004.4.
- 5.2 Kitchens:** Including all related spaces such as walk-in refrigerators, walk-in freezers, and storage areas, for the purpose of preparing food associated with dedicated dining areas, shall be classified as part of the Group “A-2” occupancy, and apply an occupant load factor of 200 (gross).
- 5.2.1 Kitchens 2,500-s.f. or less in area:** Including all related spaces for walk-in refrigerators, walk-in freezers, and storage areas for the purposes of preparing food **not associated** with dedicated dining areas, shall be classified as Group “B” and be separated from adjacent areas per CBC Table 508.4 by approved fire barriers. The applied occupant load factor shall be 200 (gross).
- 5.2.2 Kitchens more than 2,500-s.f. in area:** Including all related spaces such as walk-in refrigerators, walk-in freezers, and storage areas, for the purposes of preparing food **not associated** with dedicated dining areas, shall be classified as Group “F-1”, and be separated from adjacent areas per CBC Table 508.4 by approved fire barriers. The applied occupant load factor shall be 200 (gross).

**6. LIBRARIES:**

- 6.1 Libraries:** Shall be classified as Group “A-3” when the occupant load exceeds 49 persons, per CBC Chapter 3.
- 6.2 Stack areas (shelves and tiered stack rooms):** Shall use an occupant load factor of 100 (gross) per CBC Table 1004.1.1
- 6.3 Reading room areas (computer areas, chair and table areas):** Shall use an occupant load factor of 50 (net), per CBC Table 1004.1.1

**7. DAY CARE:**

- 7.1 Day care buildings, rooms and/or areas meeting the requirements of CBC Section 305.2:** Shall be classified as a Group “E” occupancy. The occupant load factor shall be 35 (net).
- 7.2** Per CBC Section 305.2 exception and 308.6, day care facilities “*where occupants are not capable of responding to an emergency situation without physical assistance from staff*”, shall be classified as Group “I-4” and comply with CBC section 436. The occupant load factor shall be 35 (net).
- 7.3** Group “I-4” occupancies on a community college campus are not limited to children. People with other debilitating conditions who receive custodial care for fewer than 24 hours per day will also be included in the Group “I-4” category. The occupant load factor shall be 35 (net).

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- 7.4** In some instances, the DSA plan reviewer may question a proposed Group “E” occupancy designation in which case, the architect will be required to obtain a letter from the community college district (chancellor or facilities director), to provide more information for the DSA plan reviewer about the occupants.

Information to be provided shall include:

- Age groups
- If custodial or personal care is provided for occupants
- Ability of occupants to evacuate the building without physical assistance

### **8. PARKING:**

- 8.1 Open or enclosed public parking garages:** Shall be classified as Group “S-2” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 200 (gross).

- 8.2 Carports:** May be classified as a Group “U” occupancy. Occupant load factor is not applicable.

- 9. MISC.:** An occupant load factor of 5 (net) will be applied to the following areas:

- Line or queuing spaces in front of ticket booths, concession stands, and food service windows (inside and outside).
- A lobby area that serves an assembly occupancy that has food or merchandise (or both) for sale.
- The area in front of and around stages or platforms.

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### **References:**

California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24  
Part 1, California Administrative Code (CAC)  
2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 CAC, Sections 303, and 304  
Part 2, California Building Code (CBC)  
2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 CBC, Sections 304 and 1004

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This Interpretation of Regulations (IR) is intended for use by the Division of the State Architect (DSA) staff and by design professionals to promote more uniform statewide criteria for plan review and construction inspection of projects within the jurisdiction of DSA which includes State of California public elementary and secondary schools (grades K-12), community colleges and state-owned or state-leased essential services buildings. This IR indicates an acceptable method for achieving compliance with applicable codes and regulations, although other methods proposed by design professionals may be considered by DSA.

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