
COMMUNITY COLLEGE – OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS

Disciplines: Structural

History: Revised 12/14/23
Last Revised 05/22/18
Original Issue 08/03/11

Division of the State Architect (DSA) documents referenced within this publication are available on the [DSA Forms](#) or [DSA Publications](#) webpages.

PURPOSE

To provide clarification on Occupancy Classifications and Load Factors for community college construction projects under the jurisdiction of the 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 and functions 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 not exceeding the exempt quantities as indicated on CBC Tables 307.1(1) and 307.1(2) are used or stored, shall be classified as a Group “B” occupancy, with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).

1.4 Science labs and control areas

Where hazardous materials exceed the exempt amounts as indicated on CBC Tables 307.1(1) and 307.1(2) are exceeded, labs and control areas shall be classified as a Group “H” occupancy, with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).

COMMUNITY COLLEGE–OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS

1.5 Science labs

With laboratory suites where scientific research is conducted, shall be classified as a Group “L” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 50 (net). Group L occupancies shall comply with the provisions of CBC Section 453. The quantity of hazardous materials shall comply with CBC Table 453.7.2.1.

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 hazardous materials not exceeding the exempt quantities as determined per CBC Tables 307.1(1) and 307.1(2) are stored or used, the classroom shall be classified as a Group “B” occupancy with an occupant load factor of 50 (net).

1.8 Culinary arts classrooms

Lecture classrooms shall be assigned an occupancy classification of Group B, and an occupant load factor of 20 (net) applied. Where food is prepared and later distributed for sale, the function shall be classified as a Group “F-1” occupancy. The applied 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 applied 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 applied occupant load factor shall be 50 (gross) where the area is not used for other purposes beyond physical education.

2.2 Indoor gymnasiums 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 1004.6). The open area(s) beyond the bleachers shall use an occupant load factor of 7 (net). The combined occupant loads of the seating and activity areas shall be used to determine the required number of exits, minimum exit widths, and the posting of the maximum occupant load signage.

2.3 Gymnasium combined with a raised platform or stage

The platform or stage 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 will apply to the design.

2.4 Raised platforms and stages

Shall apply an occupant load factor of 15 (net) per CBC, Table 1004.5.

2.5 Locker rooms

Shall be classified as a Group “B” occupancy with an applied occupant load factor of 50 (gross).

COMMUNITY COLLEGE–OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS

3. WEIGHT ROOMS, AEROBICS ROOMS, DANCE ROOMS AND OTHER AREAS WITH SIMILAR USES

An occupancy classification of “A-3” shall be assigned with an applied 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 1004.6.

4.2 Auditoriums without fixed seating

May include occupant classifications of Group “A- 1” depending on the use or function. The occupant load shall be determined per CBC Section 1004.5, with an occupant load factor of 7 (net) applied 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 1004.5.

5. CAFETERIAS

5.1 Dining areas

Shall be classified as Group “A-2” and shall have an occupant load factor calculated using CBC section 1004.5, applying an occupant load factor of 15 (net). Where fixed seating is provided, the occupant load shall be determined per CBC section 1004.6.

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, with an applied 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 constructed per CBC Section 707. 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 constructed per CBC Section 707. 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.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE–OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS

6.2 Stack areas (shelves and tiered stack rooms)

Shall be determined applying an occupant load factor of 100 (gross) per CBC Table 1004.5.

6.3 Reading room areas (computer areas, chair and table areas)

Shall be determined applying an occupant load factor of 50 (net), per CBC Table 1004.5.

7. CHILD CARE

7.1 Child care buildings, rooms and or areas meeting the requirements of CBC Section 305.2

Shall be classified as a Group “E” occupancy when serving children 36 months of age or older. The applied occupant load factor shall be 35 (net).

7.2 Per CBC Section 305.2 exception and 308.5, childcare facilities “*where occupants are not capable of responding to an emergency situation without physical assistance from staff*”, shall be classified as a Group “I-4”. Occupancies classified as Group I-4 shall also comply with CBC section 436. The applied 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 applied occupant load factor shall be 35 (net).

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 (academic dean or facilities director), to provide more information for the DSA plan reviewer about the occupant’s abilities.

Information to be provided shall include:

- Age group served.
- If custodial or personal care is provided for the 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 a Group “S-2” occupancy with an applied occupant load factor of 200 (gross).

8.2 Carports

May be classified as a Group “U” occupancy. An occupant load factor is not applicable.

9. MISCELLANEOUS FUNCTIONS

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.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE – OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND OCCUPANT LOAD FACTORS

REFERENCES:

California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24

Part 1, California Administrative Code (CAC), Sections 303 and 304.

Part 2, California Building Code (CBC), Sections 302.1 and 1004

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.

This IR is reviewed on a regular basis and is subject to revision at any time. Please check DSA's website for currently effective IRs. Only IRs listed on the web page at www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/Resources/IRManual.aspx at the time of plan submittal to DSA are considered applicable.