



## **2014 Alberta Building Code**

### **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.).

#### **Exceptions**

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 Town of High River’s Safety Codes 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 (building permit required).

#### **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 requiring 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 a building will meet the current Alberta Building Code requirements regarding classification and the classification will in turn meet the parking requirements (as outlined in the Town’s Land Use Bylaw) 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?



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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(1)**

Art galleries  
Auditoria  
Bowling alleys  
Churches and similar places of worship  
Clubs, nonresidential  
Community halls  
Courtrooms  
Dance halls  
Daycare facilities(2)  
Exhibition halls (other than classified in Group E)  
Gymnasias  
Lecture halls  
Libraries



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Licensed beverage establishments  
Museums  
Passenger stations and depots  
Recreational piers  
Restaurants  
Schools and colleges, nonresidential  
Undertaking premises

(1) A drama facility located in an elementary, junior high or high school for the purpose of educating students of the facility, including public performances associated with the students' education program, should be considered as a Group A, Division 2 occupancy.

(2) Daycare facilities include facilities intended to accommodate a daycare program or pre-school program as defined in the Child Care Licensing Regulation made pursuant to the Child Care Licensing Act.

#### **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



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#### **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(3)  
Hotels  
Houses  
Lodging houses  
Monasteries  
Motels  
Schools, residential

(3) As defined in the Child Care Licensing Regulation made pursuant to the Child Care Licensing Act.

#### **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



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#### **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  
Pre-packaged agricultural chemical warehouses



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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  
Light-aircraft hangars (storage only)  
Power plants  
Salesrooms  
Sample display rooms  
Storage garages, including open air parking garages  
Storage rooms  
Warehouses  
Workshops

#### **The following are excerpts from the 2014 Alberta Building Code**

##### **3.2.2.4. Buildings with Multiple Major Occupancies**

- 1) The requirements restricting fire spread and collapse for a *building* of a single *major occupancy* classification are provided in this Subsection according to its *building height* and *building area*.
- 2) If a *building* contains more than one *major occupancy*, classified in more than one Group or Division, the requirements of this Subsection concerning *building* size and construction relative to *major occupancy* shall apply according to Articles 3.2.2.5. to 3.2.2.8.

##### **3.2.2.5. Applicable Building Height and Area**

- 1) In determining the fire safety requirements of a *building* in relation to each of the *major occupancies* contained therein, the *building height* and *building area* of the entire *building* shall be used.

##### **3.2.2.6. Multiple Major Occupancies**

- 1) Except as permitted by Articles 3.2.2.7. and 3.2.2.8., in a *building* containing more than one *major occupancy*, the requirements of this Subsection for the most restricted *major occupancy* contained shall apply to the whole *building*.



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#### 3.2.2.7. Superimposed Major Occupancies

- 1) Except as permitted by Sentences (3) and (4) and Article 3.2.2.8. and as required by Sentence 3.2.2.18.(2), in a *building* in which one *major occupancy* is located entirely above another *major occupancy*, the requirements in this Subsection for each portion of the *building* containing a *major occupancy* shall apply to that portion as if the entire *building* were of that *major occupancy*.
- 2) If one *major occupancy* is located above another *major occupancy*, the *fire-resistance rating* of the floor assembly between the *major occupancies* shall be determined on the basis of the requirements of this Subsection for the lower *major occupancy*. (See also Article 3.1.3.1.)
- 3) A *building* that is wholly constructed in accordance with the *building area* and construction requirements of Article 3.2.2.50. is permitted to contain
  - a) Group A, Division 2 and Group E *major occupancies* below the third storey, and
  - b) a *storage garage* below the fourth storey (see also Sentence 4.4.2.1.(1)).
- 4) A *building* that is wholly constructed in accordance with the *building area* and construction requirements of Article 3.2.2.58. is permitted to contain
  - a) Group A, Division 2, Group E, and Group F, Division 2 or 3 *major occupancies* below the third storey, and
  - b) a *storage garage* below the fourth storey (see also Sentence 4.4.2.1.(1)).

#### 3.2.2.8. Exceptions for Major Occupancies

- 1) In a *building* in which the aggregate area of all *major occupancies* in a particular Group or Division is not more than 10% of the *floor area* of the storey in which they are located, these *major occupancies* need not be considered as *major occupancies* for the purposes of this Subsection, provided they are not classified as Group F, Division 1 or 2 *occupancies*.

#### Definitions

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 in the 2014 Alberta Building Code.)

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 incapable of evacuating to a safe location without the assistance of another person. (See Appendix A in the 2014 Alberta Building Code.)



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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  $50 \text{ kg/m}^2$  or  $1\,200 \text{ MJ/m}^2$  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  $50 \text{ kg/m}^2$  or  $1\,200 \text{ MJ/m}^2$  of floor area.