

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE GUIDE
PERMIT APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY OR USE

The Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code Act, Section 403.42, requires that a permit be issued anytime there is a change of occupancy in a commercial building, even when no alterations are being made to the building or space. In all buildings, each space is classified by an occupancy category as referenced in the International 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 evaluated for that new use. A change of occupancy is defined as a change in the purpose or level of activity within a structure that involves a change in the application of the requirements of the code. A change in the level of activity may include increased occupant loads, increased path of travel to the means of egress, or additional equipment or systems that will raise the level of hazard based on the life or fire risk.

The occupancy classifications listed in the International Building Code are summarized as follows:

Assembly Group A

- A-1: Movie theaters, concert halls
- A-2: Restaurants, taverns
- A-3: Churches, lecture halls
- A-4: Indoor sports arenas with spectator seating
- A-5: Outdoor sports arenas with spectator seating

Business Group B

- Financial institutions, professional services, animal hospitals

Education Group E

- Places of learning with more than five students from 2.5 years of age through 12th grade, but does not include classrooms located in churches

Factory Group F

- F-1: Moderate hazard industrial / production facilities
- F-2: Low hazard industrial / production facilities

High Hazard Group H

- The use of a building or structure for the processing or storing of materials that are considered hazardous in nature

Institutional Group I

- I-1: Assisted living facilities with less than 16 occupants, alcohol and drug centers
- I-2: Hospitals, nursing homes
- I-3: Prisons, detention centers
- I-4: Child daycare facilities, adult daycare facilities

Mercantile Group M

- Retail stores, markets

Residential Group R

- R-1: Hotels and motels
- R-2: Apartments
- R-3: One and two family dwellings
- R-4: Assisted living facilities with 5 to 16 occupants

Storage Group S

- S-1: Storage of moderate hazard materials
- S-2: Storage of non-combustible materials

Miscellaneous Group U

- Structures not classified in any specific occupancy such as barns and carports

In order to obtain a permit for a change of use, an applicant must submit an application to the building code official, attach three sets of construction documents, and submit a copy of the most recent certificate of occupancy issued by the municipality or by the Department of Labor and Industry for the building or space, if it is available. An application to obtain a duplicate certificate of occupancy from the Department of Labor and Industry has been attached to this assistance guide should it be needed.

A licensed architect or engineer, registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, must prepare and seal the construction documents, which illustrate compliance with applicable codes for the proposed occupancy. An unlicensed person may prepare the construction documents when the change of occupancy does not include any alterations and no changes to the building's structure or means of egress is proposed. If alterations or additions are proposed, it is necessary that the construction documents be prepared by a registered design professional.

The construction documents may show compliance with applicable codes by using one of two compliance methods; the International Building Code Chapter 34 or the International Existing Building Code Chapter 9. Both chapters are attached to this document as a reference in completing a change of occupancy application.

The three basic components of a change of occupancy include a structural evaluation, life safety evaluation, and accessibility evaluation. The construction documents must demonstrate that the existing structure has adequate structural systems to support the proposed change of occupancy and that the building is capable of supporting the minimum load requirements of the proposed use. The construction documents must illustrate that the general safety, means of egress, and life safety elements in the building are adequate and further determine any upgrades that are required. Finally, all existing buildings, or portions thereof, that undergo a change of occupancy must provide for the following accessible features:

- At least one accessible building entrance.
- At least one accessible route from an accessible building entrance to primary function areas.
- Accessible signage complying with Section 1110 (attached).
- Accessible parking, where parking is provided.
- At least one accessible passenger loading zone, when loading zones are provided.
- At least one accessible route connecting accessible parking and accessible passenger loading zones to an accessible entrance.

For existing buildings without proposed alterations, the construction documents shall show, at a minimum, the existing and proposed use group designations, construction type, existing floor plan with

new room names, occupant loads, required means of egress components, existing electrical system and load information for the new use group, existing mechanical system and equipment, existing plumbing fixtures, existing fire protection system, and accessible features. For buildings with proposed alterations, the construction documents must also show detail for each scope of work within the building.

Buildings undergoing a change of use frequently require upgrades to accessible features, sanitary facilities, exit facilities, and fire resistive elements.

To meet compliance with the required accessible features, common upgrades include the construction of ramps, wider doors, restroom upgrades, parking areas, and signage.

The minimum number of sanitary facilities in a building is determined on the occupant load. Commonly, additional restroom facilities must be constructed to meet the occupant load of the proposed use.

Depending on the location of the building on the site, exterior walls and openings in the exterior walls may require fire protection that was not previously required. Additionally, a fire suppression system may be required for the proposed use.

Exit facilities may also require upgrading to meet life safety requirements. Submitted construction documents shall clearly detail the exiting system.

Additional common changes needed for a change of use to a specific occupancy classification are summarized below. Be advised that this information is not comprehensive and additional renovations may be required.

Change to an Assembly Group A Occupancy

- Parking requirements
- Accessible route to building
- Entry accessibility
- Accessible restroom
- Accessible fixtures and hardware

Change to an Education Group E Occupancy

- Parking requirements
- Accessible route to building
- Entry accessibility
- Proper number of exits
- Fire alarm and detection systems

Change to a Business Group B Occupancy

- Parking requirements
- Accessible route to building
- Entry accessibility
- Accessible hardware and fixtures

Change to a Mercantile Group M Occupancy

- Parking requirements
- Accessible route to building
- Entry accessibility

- Accessible hardware and fixtures

Once a permit for a change of occupancy has been issued, an inspection of the building or space will be necessary prior to the issuance of a new certificate of use and occupancy.

The information provided in this assistance guide is not exhaustive as each proposed change of use is unique. Working closely with a registered design professional familiar with Commonwealth building codes is advised.

**INSPECTION PROCEDURES
CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY OR USE**

- Permit must be posted on the site of the work and clearly visible from the road until completion of the project.
- Your approved plans must be available at all times for inspection. These are the plans that were submitted with your application and were marked “Approved” by the building code official.
- DO NOT schedule an inspection if the work is not ready.
- When scheduling an inspection, you must supply a permit number to the inspector.
- Please provide a minimum of 24 hours notice when requesting an inspection.

The following inspections, as applicable, are required:

1. Footing inspection – To be done after forming and prior to placing of concrete.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 2. Foundation inspection – French drain and waterproofing.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 3. Plumbing under slab – Rough-in done prior to placing concrete.
Water test must be witnessed by inspector.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 4. Electrical inspection – Rough-in to be done prior to insulating.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 5. Plumbing inspection – Rough-in to be done prior to insulating.
Water test must be witnessed by inspector.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 6. Mechanical inspection – Rough-in to be done prior to insulating.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 7. Framing inspection – Done prior to insulating, but after heating, plumbing and wiring are roughed-in and approved.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
- Combine Inspections 4,5,6, and 7 if Possible
8. Energy efficiency inspection – To be done after insulating but before drywall.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 9. Wallboard inspection – To be done after fastening all wallboard is but before taping, mudding, etc.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**
 10. Final inspection – When job is completely finished, prior to occupancy permit and after final plumbing and electrical inspection.
Inspector, Clyde Volk **Phone, 1-800-662-6342**

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

_____ Sub-division and land development approval, if required.

Plan Review options:

_____ Plans may be submitted electronically at: <https://dropbox.yousendit.com/wexfordoffice1>
(NO CD's)

If using the electronic method, once the plans are approved, they will be returned to the design professional and it will be their responsibility to make as many hard copies as needed and provide them to the BCO and the municipality so the permit can be issued. No permits will be issued and construction **can not** start until all applicable fees are paid. It is then required that a completed set of stamped plans be on the jobsite and made available to the field inspector during the construction.

OR

_____ Three (3) complete sets of sealed drawings including specification books from a registered design professional that show in detail code compliance for all of the work proposed to include but not limited to the following information, as applicable:

- Site plan showing to scale the size and location of all new construction and all existing structures on the site. Distances from lot lines, established street grades and proposed finished grades. All parking including accessible spaces with signage. Accessible paths to entrances.
- Architectural
- Structural
- Electrical
- Mechanical
- Plumbing
- Accessibility (details and elevations of restrooms, checkout counters, etc. and routes with elevations for all accessibility)
- Energy calculations with HVAC and lighting (CommCheck or IECC)
- All signage (tactile exit, restroom, etc.)
- Use group(s) for each area or room (IBC Chapter 3)
- Building limitation; height and area (IBC Chapter 5)
- Type of construction (IBC Chapter 6)
- Fire resistant materials and construction (IBC Chapter 7)
- Fire protection system(s) (IBC Chapter 9)
- Occupant load for each area or room (IBC Section 1004)
- Accessibility advisory board approval for public pools prior to submission.
- Department of health approval for health care facilities prior to submission.
- Special inspections per IBC Section 1704 & 1710