Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

2015 SBC Code Interpretation

The following interpretation, policy or code alternate is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation, policy or code alternate to specific projects may vary.

Code Issue:

In a building with non-separated occupancies, how do I calculate the occupant load used to determine which Chapter 9 fire sprinkler requirements apply to the project?

Example: A one-story building has an A-2 restaurant with an occupant load of 75 (~1,700 square feet including kitchen and restrooms) next to a B office with an occupant load of 15 (~1,600 square feet). The applicant wants to use the non-separated occupancy provisions to avoid the 2-hour rated fire barrier.

Interpretation:

In buildings with non-separated occupancies, the occupant loads of each proposed occupancy within a fire area are added together to determine if the fire area (and intervening floors) need fire sprinkler protection based on SBC Chapter 9.   Sometimes SBC 508.3.1 is misinterpreted and the occupant load factor for the most restrictive occupancy is applied to all occupancies in the fire area and the resulting occupant loads are added together to determine whether sprinkler requirements apply.   This approach is incorrect and not accepted by SDCI.

For questions about whether this code solution applies to your project:

- *If you have submitted a permit application, contact the Building Code plan reviewer assigned to your application*

- *If you have not submitted an application, send us a question through the SDCI website*
  http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources/sendusaquestion/default.htm or in person at the Applicant Services Center. Visit the Applicant Services Center website for more information about hours and location
  http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/applicantservicescenter/default.htm

Construction Review & Inspection Quality
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