



COMMUNITY SAFETY & DEVELOPMENT

Building Inspections

Change of Occupancy and Special Inspections

The City of Nanaimo has developed the following guide to assist those contemplating conversion of a building from one occupancy, under the BC Building Code, to another. These requirements apply to conversions of single family dwellings to commercial occupancies and a change of occupancy in buildings with a maximum 600 m² building area (footprint).

The requirements of the BC Building Code regarding life safety, property protection, washrooms and accessibility for the disabled are all dependant upon the use or occupancy of the building. For example, the number of washrooms in a restaurant varies greatly from the number required in a retail store of the same size.

Table A (pages 2 and 3) outlines the general requirements for conversion of a building (including a house) from one occupancy to another:

- Assembly occupancy includes restaurants, clubs, galleries and schools.
- Retail occupancy includes shops, stores, delicatessens, and take-out food.
- Business and service occupancy includes salons, services and offices.
- Residential is one or more dwelling units.

Table B (page 4) outlines when seismic upgrading is required for conversion of a building from one occupancy to another.

Special Inspection

Special Inspections can be arranged by making an application at the Building Inspection Division. Special Inspection fee is \$100.00, plus HST and inspections can be scheduled as soon as the following day. Appointments can be made with your inspector and you will receive a written report outlining the issues specific to your building.

The purpose of a special inspection is to assist an owner or potential tenant in the preliminary review of a proposed building permit application to change the occupancy of a building or leased space, to inform the applicant of the requirements to obtain a building permit including requirements for input from architects or engineers, to inform the applicant of the requirements of the BC Building Code for fire safety and requirements for handicapped access or to determine whether a house is suitable for relocation from one lot within the City to another.

The Special Inspection does not replace the services normally provided by a qualified designer, architect or professional engineer; provide opinions or make judgements regarding the suitability of land for the purposes of future construction or provide a complete analysis of the state of a building.

Seismic Restraint Upgrading (Table B)

A change of occupancy triggers the requirement, under the BC Building Code, for upgrading the building's seismic restraint systems (the building's ability to withstand the forces of an earthquake). As required under *Table B*, proposed Part 4 buildings (A-2 use) and structural elements of a building that fall outside of Part 9 of the BC Building Code must be evaluated by a structural engineer to determine if the building requires upgrading under the NRC Guidelines for Seismic Evaluations of Existing Buildings.

TABLE A

Requirement	A2 (restaurant)	E (retail)	D(office/service)	C (residential)	REASON FOR REQUIREMENT
Fire resistance					LIFE SAFETY
Fire separation between suites	A2 45 minute E 2 hour D/C 1 hour	E/D 45 minute A2 2 hour C 1 hour	D none E 45 minute C/A2 1 hour	A2 1 hour D 1 hour E 2 hour/1 hour if <3 suites C	
At service rooms	45, 0 sprinklered	45, 0 sprinklered	45, 0 sprinklered	45, 0 sprinklered	
At garages	1.5 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hour or none	
Closures	1 hr =45/45=20	1 hr=45/45=20	1 hr=45/45=20	1 hr=45/45=20	
Fire dampers	In all rated assemblies where ducts penetrate	In all rated assemblies where ducts penetrate	In all rated assemblies where ducts penetrate	In all rated assemblies where ducts penetrate	
Rated assemblies					
Roof	45/0 sprinklered	0, 45 if > 2 storey	0, 45 if > 2 storey	0, 45 if > 2 storey	
Floor	45	45	45	45	
Supports	45	45	45	45/ 0 within suite	
Exits					
Door swing	Out	Out	Out	In	
Maximum area and travel distance for egress within a room or suite with a single exit if Occupant load <60 persons < 3 stories.	150 m2/15 m unsprinklered 200m2/25m sprinklered	150m2/15m	200m2/25m	Up or down one storey to an exit, Single unit	
Headroom	2100mm	2100mm	2100mm	2100mm	
Protect openings exposing exit	Wired glass or glass block @ every exit	Wired glass or glass block if single exit	Wired glass or glass block if single exit	Wired glass or glass block if single exit	
Fire detection /safety					
Emergency Lighting	To illuminate path from every area of building to exit(s)	To illuminate path from every area of building to exit(s)	To illuminate path from every area of building to exit(s)	In public areas only	
Fire Alarm	>3 storey >150 occupants	>3 storey >300 occupants	>3 storey > 300 occupants	>4 suites served by a single corridor	
Flame spread	150	150	150	150 in public areas	
Interconnected floor permitted if:	2 storey sprinklered or opening is for stairs only	2 storey - 100m2 per storey 25m to exit, or as per A-2 requirements	2 storey - 100m2 per storey 25m to exit, or as per A-2 requirements	Not permitted	
Stairs & Guards					
Guards	42" at landings 36" at stairs 4" openings non-climbable from 5.5" to 35.5" above walking surface	42" at landings 35.5" at stairs 4" openings non-climbable from 5.5" to 35.5" above walking surface	42" at landings 35.5" at stairs 4" openings non-climbable from 5.5" to 35.5" above walking surface	42" at landings 35.5" at stairs 36" within suites 4" openings non-climbable from 5.5" to 35.5" above walking surface	
Handrails	34" to 38"	31 1/2" to 38"	31 1/2" to 38"		
Stair rise & run	Rise 5" to 7" Run 11" min	Rise 5" to 7 7/8" Run 9" to 14" Tread 10" to 14"	Rise 5" to 7 7/8" Run 9" to 14" Tread 10" to 14"	Rise 5" to 7 7/8" Run 8" to 14" Tread 9 1/4" to 14"	

TABLE A (Continued)

Requirement	A2 (restaurant)	E (retail)	D office/service)	C (residential)	REASON FOR REQUIREMENT
Structural					
Seismic evaluation	Required	See Table B	See Table B	See Table B	LIFE SAFETY
Additional floor load	50 lb/sf -no increase	100 lb/sf	100 lb/sf 1 st storey 50 lb/sf 2 nd storey	50 lb/sf	
Spatial separation					
(Openings Approximate)	<1.2m - 0 @ 1.5m - 7-18% @2m - 7-21% @3m - 9-50%	<1.2m - 0 @1.5m - 4% @2m - 4-6% @3m - 6-20%	<1.2m - 0 @1.5m - 7-8% @2m - 10% @3m - 25%	<1.2m - 0 @1.5m - 7-8% @2m - 10% @3m - 25%	PROPERTY PROTECTION
Wall construction	@0-10% 1hr non-combustible with n/c cladding @11-25% 1 hr combustible with n/c cladding @26-100% 3/4 hr combustible	@0-10% 2 hr non-combustible with n/c cladding @11-25% 2 hr combustible with n/c cladding @26-100% 1 hr combustible	0-10% 1 hr non-combustible with n/c cladding 11-25% 1 hr combustible with n/c cladding 25-100% 3/4 hr combustible	@ <0.6m combustible with n/c cladding, no openings	
Washrooms					
Number required	≤10 = 1 universal wc, ≤20 = 1 universal wc, 1 unisex ≤50 = 1f,1m both being universal ≤60=1f, 1m, 1 universal ≤110=2f, 1m,1 universal	≤10 = 1 universal wc, ≤20 = 1 universal wc, 1 unisex (# based on number of staff)	≤10 = 1 universal wc, ≤20 = 1 universal wc, 1 unisex ≤50 = 1f,1m both being universal ≤60=1f, 1m, 1 universal	1 wc	HEALTH
Handicap access					
Washrooms	Toilet room ₂ Additional accessible stall @>150 occupants	Toilet room ₂ accessible stall @>150 occupants	Toilet room ₂ accessible stall @>150 occupants	N/A	ACCESS
Ramps	To one entrance	Retail Space <50m ² exempt	To one entrance	N/A	
Door width/height	2'8" / 6'8"	2'8" / 6'8"	2'8" / 6'8"	Varies / 6'6"	
Basements					
Basement vs. crawlspace defined	Crawlspaces must be less than 1.8m height no occupancy no flue pipe	Crawlspaces must be less than 1.8m height no occupancy no flue pipe	Crawlspaces must be less than 1.8m height no occupancy no flue pipe	Crawlspaces must be less than 1.8m height no occupancy no flue pipe	
Bylaws					
Zoning See Bylaw 4500 for specifics	See Bylaw 4500	See Bylaw 4500	See Bylaw 4500	See Bylaw 4500	USE
Parking	1 space/3 seats	1 space/20m ² gross floor area	Office use: varies - 4.5 spaces per 100m ² net floor area ₃ Service use: varies - 1 space/20m ² gross floor area	2 spaces per dwelling unit - single and duplex. 1.66 spaces per unit for triplex and greater	
Sprinkler bylaw requires bldg to be sprinklered where:	Value of renovation exceeds 50% building value	Value of renovation exceeds 50% building value	Value of renovation exceeds 50% building value	More than 2 dwelling units or community care facilities	

- 1 wc = water closet (toilet)
- 2 wc in universal room does not counts as one of total required toilets
- 3 net floor area = 90% of gross floor area

TABLE B

Current Use	Description	Proposed Use	Requirement for Seismic Upgrading
Assembly Group 1 – 4 (A)	Gathering of people for civic, religious, social, educational, recreational or like purposes or for food/drink consumption	B, C, F1	Yes
Assembly Group 1 – 4 (A)		D, E, F2, F3	No
Institutional Group 1 – 3 (B)	Care or detention facilities	A, F1	Yes
Institutional Group 1 – 3 (B)		C, D, E, F2, F3	No
Residential (C)	Housing/sleeping accommodation	A, B, F1	Yes
Residential (C)		D, E, F2, F3	No
Office (D)	Business use and professional/personal services	A, B, C, F1	Yes
Office (D)		E, F2, F3	No
Retail (E)	Display/selling retail goods	A, B, C, F1	Yes
Retail (E)		D, F2, F3	No
Industrial (F1)	Assembling, manufacturing, repairing or storing goods	A, B, C, D, E	Yes
Industrial (F1)		F2, F3	No
Industrial (F2/3)		A, B, C, D, E	Yes
Industrial (F2/3)		F1	No

Where the proposed change of use is to Assembly, City Council has adopted the following policy: Where a building can meet the classification requirement under the current Building Code, Subsection 3.2.2., for an Assembly Occupancy, no seismic upgrading is required if:

- the occupant load for the assembly use is less than 50 persons;
- the area of all assembly uses in the building is not more than 93m²;
- seismic upgrading for potentially non-structural falling hazards within the suite and its egress route are assessed by an Engineer (as required by Building Inspection); and
- the use does not include a liquor primary occupancy.

A building classified under this policy will always have a limited Assembly use.