

Occupant Load Calculations for Licensed Beverage Establishments & Licensed Restaurants

For all new and renovated establishments serving liquor, the British Columbia liquor licensing regulations requires an occupant load calculation determined by the Building Inspection Division. The Building Inspection Division will determine the occupant load based on the establishment meeting the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw and the BC Building Code for health and life-safety. A building permit application is required for the process of determining occupant load. A minimum building permit fee of \$40.00 will be charged.

For Liquor Primary Licenses a City Council resolution is required for alterations resulting in an increase in occupant load or for the addition of a patio. Contact the Planning Division for further information on this process.

DETERMINING OCCUPANT LOAD

Items 1 – 7 below must all be considered in determining allowable occupant load.

1. Net floor area:

- An occupant load of 1.2 m² net floor area per person for licensed restaurants.
- An occupant load of 0.95 m² net floor area per person for licensed beverage establishments was adopted by City Council Nov. 2001 (i.e., 100 m² [1,076 ft²] lounge will accommodate 107 persons [100 ÷ .95 = 107]).
- Areas such as stairs, entries or vestibules, shafts, partitions, permanent fixtures, kitchens, storage, staff-only areas and washrooms are not included.
- Patios & decks are not included as they are assumed to be occupied by the same patrons already counted indoors (i.e., the same persons sit outdoors in fine weather).

2. Number of waterclosets: [BCBC 3.7.2.2 (6)]

1-50 persons	1 male, 1 female
1-100 persons	1 male, 2 female
101-150 persons	2 male, 3 female
151-200 persons	2 male, 4 female
210-250 persons	3 male, 5 female
251-300 persons	3 male, 6 female

3. Exit capacity: (BCBC 3.4.3.2)

6.1 mm of exit width required per person (i.e., a 36-inch door will accommodate 150 persons but any single door is not permitted to accommodate more than half the occupant load).

4. Fire alarm: (BCBC 3.2.4.1.2.g)

Fire alarm is required where the occupant load exceeds 150 persons. Fire alarms must be designed by an electrical engineer; drawings are reviewed by Nanaimo Fire Department.

5. Exit signs: (BCBC 3.4.5.1.1.(6))

Exit signs are required where the occupant load exceeds 60 persons.

6. Panic Hardware: (BCBC 3.4.6.15.(2))

Panic hardware is required on exit doors from floor areas containing more than 100 persons.

7. Parking: Depends on location and/or zoning.

Typically one space is required for each three seats in a licensed beverage establishment.

Building Code Review

1. Provide a floor plan of the premises showing the following:

- Layout of rooms with uses noted.
- Permanent fixtures (i.e., bar, partitions, stage, pool table, etc.).
- Number of washrooms and toilets/urinals including staff washrooms.
- Exits, with dimensions of doors.
- Dimensions and floor areas of both public and staff-only areas.
- Plan showing on-site parking.

2. Using Items 1-3 on page 1 of this document as a checklist, calculate the occupant load, number of washrooms required and exit capacity.

Existing licensed capacity	persons	
Floor area (see item 1)	m ²	
Occupant load based on floor area (see item 1)	persons	
Waterclosets	# male	# female
Exit capacity	mm	

3. Building inspection staff will review your drawing and calculations. *Buildings that are deficient in any of the items (1-7) on page 1 of this document must be upgraded to the minimum requirement of the BC Building Code before an increase in occupant load will be considered.*

- 4. A building permit is required if the building must be altered to accommodate a new occupant load.**
- Permit fee is based on value of alterations.
 - The BC Fire Code requires that an occupant load sign be posted wherever the occupant load exceeds 60 people. Building Inspection staff will visit the premises to ensure the sign is posted, and then complete the file.
 - The new occupant load will be forwarded to the Nanaimo Fire Department for their inspection records.

For more information call the Building Inspection Division @ 755-4429