

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

CHANGE SUMMARY: The scope of a change of occupancy has been narrowed where no classification change takes place.

2021 CODE TEXT: 202 CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY. ~~A change in the use of a building or a portion of a building which results in one of the following: Either of the following shall be considered as a change of occupancy where this code requires a greater degree of safety, accessibility, structural strength, fire protection, means of egress, ventilation or sanitation than is existing in the current building or structure:~~

- ~~1. Any change in the occupancy classification of a building or structure.~~
- ~~2. Any change in the purpose of, or a change in the level of activity within, a building or structure.~~
- ~~1. A change of occupancy classification.~~
- ~~2. A change from one group to another group within an occupancy classification.~~
- ~~3. Any change in use within a group for which there is a change in application of the requirements of this code.~~

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: Every building, or portion of a building, must be assigned an occupancy classification with respect to its use by placing it into one of the specific occupancy groups identified in Chapter 3. These groups are used throughout the code to address everything from allowable building size to required fire protection features. The occupancy

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Definition of Change of Occupancy



Photo courtesy of buzbuzz

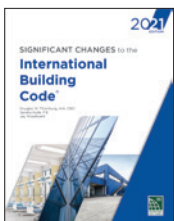
Multiple-tenant building.

classification process represents identifying a distinct hazard, or more typically a group of hazards, that must be specifically addressed throughout the applicable code requirements. For example, the classification of Group A recognizes those assembly-related concerns associated with theaters, night clubs, places of worship and other facilities where large numbers of people congregate in a concentrated manner. Where there is a change in the use of the building that modifies the type or extent of the hazards created by the new use, a change of occupancy occurs. The scope of a change of occupancy is now more specifically stated in order to identify when such a condition takes place.

Historically, a change of occupancy only occurred where there was a specific change of the building's occupancy category. This included both changes within an occupancy group, as well as changes from one occupancy group to another. This scope of a change of occupancy was modified in the 2015 IBC to include a change in use, and clarified in the 2018 edition to indicate that all such changes in use that result in a change in the code's application are considered as a change of occupancy, even if no change in classification occurs. The 2021 IBC has been further revised to narrow the scope of a change of occupancy where there is no change in classification.

Where no change in occupancy classification occurs, a change of occupancy now exists only in those buildings where 1) there is a change in a building's purpose or level of activity, 2) that functional change is such that the current IBC requires a greater degree of regulation than presently exists in the current building, and 3) the greater degree of regulation required by the current IBC occurs only in the areas of accessibility, structural strength, fire protection, means of egress, ventilation or sanitation. The intent is to limit the application of a change of occupancy where there is no change in classification to only those new uses that present a higher risk to the life safety or welfare of the occupants than was created by the previous use.

Due to the restructured scope of the definition, there is a question as to how to address a building that undergoes a change in occupancy classification where no greater degree of safety, accessibility, structural strength, fire protection, means of egress, ventilation or sanitation is required by the code. An example is the remodeling of a Group A-2 assembly space in a manner where it would be reclassified as Group B. Where the new use poses an equal or lesser hazard level, but such use is classified as a different occupancy, it would seem appropriate to also consider it as a change of occupancy even though no modifications would be required.



This excerpt is taken from *Significant Changes to the International Building Code®*, 2021 Edition. The Significant Changes series takes you directly to the most important changes that impact projects. Key changes are identified then followed by in-depth discussion of how the change affects real-world application. Photos, tables and illustrations are included to further clarify application. Available for the IBC, IRC, IFC, IECC and IPC/IMC/IFGC, the Significant Changes publications are very useful training and review tools for transitioning to a new code edition.