

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES ADVISORY



Major Occupancy Definitions

Which *buildings* are within the scope of Part 3 of the National *Building Code*?

The NBC classifies *buildings* by:

- *major occupancy* (what they are used for),
- *building area* (size), and
- *building height*.

All *buildings* containing any *assembly, care, detention, treatment* or *high hazard industrial major occupancies* fall under Part 3 of the NBC regardless of their size or height (a detailed description of occupancies follows). It is important to note that if these major occupancies are located anywhere in the building (not just the tenant space of interest), the entire building is within the scope of Part 3. Any *building* over 600m² in *building area* or exceeding 3 *storeys* in *building height* falls under Part 3 regardless of the *major occupancy*. *Buildings* essential to the provision of services in the event of a disaster (*post-disaster buildings*) also fall within the scope of Part 3.

The *building area* is the greatest horizontal area of the *building* above *grade*, not the sum of floor areas of *storeys*. The NBC provides specific rules for calculating *building height* and determining the *major occupancy* of a *building* (if the *building* is used for more than one type of *major occupancy*).

Which *buildings* are within the scope of Part 4 of the National *Building Code*?

Part 4 of the National *Building Code* (NBC) sets standards for structural design. All *buildings* that are within the scope of Part 3 are also within the scope of Part 4 of the NBC. *Buildings* that have structures not specifically set out in Part 9 of the NBC are within the scope of Part 4 of the NBC. For example, a 400 m², one *storey* office *building* (a *building* with business and personal services *occupancy* that is less than 600 m² in *building area* and less than 3 *storeys* in *building height*) is not within the scope of Part 3 of the NBC and would not automatically need to be designed by a professional designer. However, if the structure of this *building* includes arched or glulam beams that support the roof, a professional designer will be needed to design the structure because this type of structure is not set out in Part 9 of the NBC.

Major Occupancy Classifications

Assembly occupancy (Group A)

A *building*, or part thereof, used for the gathering of persons for civic, political, travel, religious, social, educational, recreational or like purposes, or for the consumption of food or drink. Some examples are theatres, churches, community halls, libraries, licensed beverage establishments, passenger depots, restaurants, cafes, schools, arenas, gyms and yoga studios. Group A contains 4 Divisions.

Care, treatment or detention occupancy (Group B)

A *building*, or part thereof, used by persons who require special care or *treatment* because of cognitive or physical limitations or by persons who are restrained from, or are incapable of self-preservation because of security measures not under their control. Some examples are: penitentiaries, prisons, psychiatric hospitals, hospitals, convalescent homes, nursing homes, orphanages, and care homes with sleeping accommodation for more than ten persons. Group B contains 3 Divisions.

Residential occupancy (Group C)

A *building*, or part thereof, used by persons for whom sleeping accommodation is provided but who are not harboured for the purpose of receiving care or *treatment* or are not involuntarily detained. Some examples are apartments, boarding houses, dormitories, hotels, houses, lodging houses, and motels.

Business and personal services occupancy (Group D)

A *building*, or part thereof, used for the transaction of business or the rendering or receiving of professional or personal services. Some examples are: banks, hairdressing shops, dental offices, medical offices, offices, police stations, small tool and appliance rental and service establishments.

Mercantile occupancy (Group E)

A *building*, or part thereof, used for the displaying or selling of retail goods, wares or merchandise. Some examples are: department stores, exhibition halls, markets, shops, stores, and supermarkets.

High hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 1)

A *building* used for the assembling, fabricating, manufacturing, processing, repairing or storing of goods and materials and which contains sufficient quantities of highly combustible and flammable or explosive materials that, because of their inherent characteristics, constitute a special fire hazard. Some examples are: bulk plants for flammable liquids, bulk storage warehouses for hazardous substances, distilleries, flour mills, grain elevators, spray painting operations, and waste paper processing plants.

Medium hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 2)

A *building*, or part thereof, used for the assembling, fabricating, manufacturing, processing, repairing or storing of goods and materials in which the combustible content is more than 50 kg/m² or 1200 MJ/m² of floor area and not classified as *high hazard industrial occupancy*. Some examples are: cold storage plants, factories, laboratories, *repair garages*, service stations, warehouses, woodworking factories.

Low hazard industrial occupancy (Group F, Division 3)

A *building* used for the assembling, fabricating, manufacturing, processing, repairing or storing of goods and materials in which the combustible content is less than 50 kg/m² or 1200 mJ/m² of floor area. Some examples are: factories, laboratories, *storage garages*, warehouses, workshops.

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