

OCCUPANCY LOAD PERMITTING

The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) has established an occupancy load permitting process to assist residents who are planning a *special event* such as a wedding, sports event and other functions. An occupant load is necessary to provide for the safety of occupants and can be defined as “*the total number of persons that might occupy a building or portion thereof at any one time*”.

As a requirement of adopted codes and standards in the *Fire Prevention Regulations*, the OFM is responsible for establishing occupancy loads and issuing permits for assembly spaces / public spaces or where a change of use is being proposed whether temporary or permanent.

The OFM is also responsible for ensuring these facilities are safe from the threat of fire. In order to do that, the OFM may inspect or request information related to the maintenance of a buildings life safety systems i.e. – exiting / fire alarm / sprinkler system / emergency lighting and power supply, and may also include maintenance records for commercial cooking and heating equipment etc. This is to confirm a building or space is safe for use prior to issuing an occupant load permit.

Often, events are requested to be held in non- conforming buildings. Events in non-conforming buildings require additional investigation, time, effort and scrutiny by the OFM to confirm fire safety requirements. The OFM may also require other site specific requirements to ensure the fire safety of occupants. Should fire safety requirements not be attainable or the OFM ‘s requirements not be satisfied, an occupancy load permit will not be issued.

Note: An OFM occupancy load permit is required prior to receiving a special event license through the Liquor Licensing Board.

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

Applicants are responsible for completing and submitting an OFM Occupancy Load Application form that provides all details associated with their event. It is important to understand that this can be a time consuming task as applicants are responsible for providing details on measurements along with a legible drawing and any requested fire safety information as required. Ensure to plan your event well in advance.

An application package and guide to assist clients in applying for an occupant load certificate can be located here – [Occupancy Load Permit Application](#)

Note 1: Non legible or incomplete application forms or drawings will result in the application being denied.

Note 2: Regional Assistant Fire Marshals are available to provide guidance in completing all requested information.

SPECIAL OCCASION PERMIT

Special occasion permits are issued by the NWT Liquor Licensing Board (LLB) who also regulates events where liquor is being served at a specific location for a specific date and time. The Office of the Fire Marshal issues an occupant load certificate to the applicant and provides a copy to the LLB. The required information must be provided by the applicant prior to issuance of an occupant load certificate.

For additional information pertaining to the LLB, please visit the following site:
<http://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/services/liquor/special-occasion-permits>

APPLICATION DEADLINE

OFM has established the following application deadlines based on the complexity of an event and necessary time to satisfy safety requirements:

- **10 business days in advance of a straightforward event;**
- **45 days in advance of complex event.**

Note: Please contact your Regional Assistant Fire Marshal for assistance in determining your application deadline.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Regional Assistant Fire Marshal's located in each region are responsible for assisting clients with identification and understanding of requirements, contact information is as follows:

North Slave Region:
(867) 767-9167 ext. 21133

Beaufort Delta Region:
(867) 777-7297

South Slave Region:
(867) 872- 6535

Deh Cho Region:
(867) 695-7230

Sahtu Region:
(867) 587-7115

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a special event?

A special event is an event that can occur indoors or outdoors, has a defined space, a limited start and end date, where a change of building use is proposed that requires permitting prior to the event taking place.

What is a complex event?

A complex event is an event that requires additional time and effort by the OFM to confirm fire safety requirements. Public events in arenas, large tents or high hazard locations such as aircraft hangers or garages where a large number of people are expected to gather can be complex and take longer to satisfy OFM requirements. Contact the OFM well in advance (minimum 45 days) to determine if your event qualifies as complex.

What unit of measurement is to be used in my occupancy permit application?

The OFM requires all measurements to be metric as outlined in the application form.

Who enforces the requirements for the event?

The OFM confirms the life safety requirements of the building prior to issuing an occupancy permit. Liquor inspectors may inspect and enforce site requirements at any time prior to or during the event.

What is a non-conforming building?

A non-conforming building for the purposes of obtaining an occupancy load permit is a building that is being used for a purpose it was not designed for. i.e. – liquor establishments are classified under the National Building Code of Canada as “A2” (Assembly Occupancies) and office buildings are classified by the NBC as “D” (Office Buildings). A request to host a liquor event in an office building would be hosting the event in a non-conforming building.

What is a temporary structure?

A temporary structure is a structure that is being used for a specific period of time and will not remain in place indefinitely. i.e. – Tent

How can I ensure inspection and testing documentation for life safety systems have been submitted as required in my application?

It is best to check with your Regional Assistant Fire Marshal first to determine if they already have the required documentation on file. If the OFM does not have the records on file, the applicant will need to contact the building owner to either obtain copies of the documents or have the building owner submit them to the OFM.

What are site specific requirements?

Site specific requirements are requirements that the OFM requires to ensure fire safety. Codes and standards address the majority of fire safety related items, however when public events are held in locations where additional risk is involved i.e. – non-conforming buildings, additional requirements may be applied for the OFM to feel satisfied that the event is safe for attendance by the public.

Why is my occupant load lower than before or expected?

Every event is unique, especially if the floor plan changes. Occupant loads are established by applying specified calculations outlined in the NBC based on the useable space of the location and minus any fixed objects such as stages / bars etc. The more fixed objects that go into a floor plan will reduce the useable space available for occupants. So where 50 people were approved at a previous event, 30 may only be permitted due to the changes in the floor plan and useable space available for the public.

Do I require an occupancy load certificate for an open air event?

Yes, you will require an occupancy load permit for an open air event so the OFM can confirm means of egress / site specific requirements and the number of persons able to be located within the defined area as determined by the code.