

Asked for a Code Analysis? Here's What You Need to Know

What is a Code Analysis?

A **Code Analysis** is a document prepared by a qualified building professional that explains how a space meets the current building and fire safety rules, or what upgrades are needed for it to meet those rules. It's required when the use of a building or space is changing **even if no construction is planned**.

What is a Change of Occupancy?

A change of occupancy (or change of use) means using a space for something different than what it was originally approved for.

Some examples:

- Turning a retail store into a restaurant
- Using an office space as a daycare
- Converting a warehouse into a gym

Why does this matter? Because each type of business or activity has different safety and building code requirements, especially for things like fire protection, bathrooms, accessibility, and emergency exits.

Why a Code Analysis is Required

Under the BC Building Code, any change in use must be reviewed by a qualified designer or registered professional to confirm the building still meets safety standards.

A Code Analysis outlines:

- The current and proposed use of the space
- How the building meets or will be upgraded to meet Code requirements

The City requires this document **before issuing a business licence**.

What you need to do

If you know you are changing occupancy use, or if a Code Analysis has been requested, you should:

1. Hire a qualified designer or building professional
2. Have them prepare a Code Analysis
3. Submit it with your business license or building permit application

This helps avoid delays, keeps people safe, and ensures your business is up to code from day one.

Types of Occupancy (Use Classifications)

The BC Building Code (BCBC) divides building uses into groups. These determine what safety features are needed.

Here are common classifications:

- **Group A-2 – Assembly:**
Restaurants, clubs, schools, daycares (not in homes), art galleries
- **Group D – Business and Personal Services:**
Offices, salons, and small meeting spaces under 30 people
- **Group E – Retail:**
Stores and shops
- **Group C – Residential:**
Apartments, houses, home daycares (up to 8 kids)
- **Group F – Industrial:**
Warehouses, manufacturing spaces, workshops

Each group has different requirements and safety needs.

For example, a restaurant (Group A-2) usually needs more bathrooms and stronger fire separation than a store (Group E).

Please see the back of this bulletin for a complete list as per the 2024 BCBC.

What Triggers a Building Permit?

Even without renovations, a building permit may be required if:

- Safety features or exits must be added
- Plumbing, ventilation, or accessibility upgrades are needed

What's Involved in a Code Analysis?

The professional you hire will review things like:

- Bathroom counts and plumbing needs
- Fire-resistance between suites
- Emergency exit distances
- Heating and ventilation
- Structural load capacity

If the building doesn't meet Code, you may need:

- Physical upgrades
- An Alternative Solution Report (a proposed safe workaround that meets the intent of the Code)

What Happens if You Don't Comply?

If you do not provide a code analysis when requested, the City may:

- Reject your business license application
- If operating without a business license, use ticketing and other bylaw measures of enforcement

If your Code Analysis shows that your space doesn't meet the safety standards, the City may:

- Delay your business license
- Require upgrades before opening
- In some low-risk cases, issue a temporary license while upgrades are completed

Group	Division	Type	Examples
A – Assembly+	A-1	Performing Arts	Motion picture theatres, Opera houses, Television studios with audiences, Theatres (including experimental)
	A-2	General Gathering Spaces	Art galleries, Auditoria, Bowling alleys, Churches, Non-residential clubs, Community halls, Courtrooms, Dance halls, Daycares, Exhibition halls (not mercantile), Gymnasias, Lecture halls, Libraries, Licensed beverage establishments, Museums, Passenger stations and depots, Recreational piers, Restaurants, Non-residential schools and colleges, Undertaking premises
	A-3	Arena-Type Spaces	Arenas, Indoor swimming pools (with or without spectators), Rinks
	A-4	Outdoor Assembly	Amusement park structures, Bleachers, Grandstands, Reviewing stands, Stadia
B – Detention, Treatment, and Care	B-1	Detention	Jails, Penitentiaries, Police stations with detention, Prisons, Psychiatric hospitals with detention, Reformatories with detention
	B-2	Treatment	Care facilities with treatment, Convalescent/recovery/rehab centres with treatment, Hospices with treatment, Hospitals, Infirmaries, Nursing homes with treatment, Psychiatric hospitals (no detention), Respite centres with treatment
	B-3	Care (No Treatment)	Assisted/supportive living, Care facilities (no treatment), Children's custodial homes, Convalescent/recovery/rehab centres (no treatment), Group homes, Hospices (no treatment), Nursing homes (no treatment), Reformatories (no detention), Respite centres (no treatment)
C – Residential	-	Living Spaces	Apartments, Boarding houses, Residential clubs, Residential colleges, Convents, Dormitories, Hotels, Houses, Lodging houses, Monasteries, Motels, Residential schools
D – Business & Personal Services	-	Offices & Services	Banks, Barber shops, Hair salons, Beauty parlours, Dental offices, Dry cleaners (self-service, no flammable solvents), Laundromats (self-service), Medical offices, Offices, Police stations (no detention), Radio stations, Small tool/appliance rental and repair shops
E – Mercantile	-	Retail & Sales	Department stores, Exhibition halls (sales-related), Markets, Shops, Stores, Supermarkets
F – Industrial	F-1	High-Hazard	Flammable liquid bulk plants, Hazardous substance storage warehouses, Cereal mills, Chemical plants, Distilleries, Dry cleaning plants (flammable solvents), Feed mills, Flour mills, Grain elevators, Lacquer factories, Mattress factories, Paint/varnish/pyroxylin factories, Rubber plants, Spray painting, Waste paper plants
	F-2	Medium-Hazard	Aircraft hangars, Box factories, Candy plants, Cold storage plants, Dry cleaning (no flammable solvents), Electrical substations, Factories, Freight depots, Helicopter pads on roofs, Laboratories, Laundries (not self-service), Mattress factories, Planing mills, Printing plants, Repair garages, Salesrooms, Service stations, Storage rooms, TV studios (no audience), Warehouses, Wholesale rooms, Woodworking factories, Workshops
	F-3	Low-Hazard	Creameries, Factories, Laboratories, Light aircraft storage hangars, Power plants, Salesrooms, Sample rooms, Storage garages (including open air),

			Storage rooms, Warehouses, Workshops
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