



**Alameda County Fire Department
Fire Prevention Bureau**

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

Group R, Division R-3.1 Occupancies

(2007 California Fire & Building Codes; California Code of Regulations, Title 19)

The following informational bulletin has been developed by the Fire Department to apprise you of the Fire and Building Code requirements necessary to gain fire clearance to operate a Group R, Division 3.1 Occupancy. Additional requirements may be applied to a specific site. Any proposed location must receive zoning approval from the appropriate Planning Department and all work must receive the appropriate permits from the Building Department. Regulations governing these facilities have been developed by the State Fire Marshal. Local jurisdictions may not adopt requirements more stringent, except for regulations relating to roof coverings.

Group R, Division 3.1 - Residential facilities (RF) and residential care facilities for the elderly (RCFE) (each accommodating six or less ambulatory, bedridden or non-ambulatory clients).

Residential Care Facility For the Elderly (RCFE), as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 1569.2, shall mean a facility with a housing arrangement chosen voluntarily by persons 60 years of age or over, or their authorized representative, where varying levels and intensities of care and supervision, protective supervision or personal care are provided, based on their varying needs, as determined in order to be admitted and to remain in the facility. Persons under 60 years of age with compatible needs, as determined by the Department of Social Services in regulations, may be allowed to be admitted or retained in a residential-care facility for the elderly.

Residential Facility (RF), as defined in Section 1502 of the Health and Safety Code, shall mean any family home, group care facility, or similar facility determined by the director of Social Services, for 24-hour nonmedical care of persons in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the individual. Such facilities include small family homes and social rehabilitation facilities.

The determination of ambulatory or non-ambulatory status is made by the Department of Social Services.

Occupancy Requirements:

1. Clients who become temporarily bedridden may continue to be housed in R-3.1 occupancies. The operator must, within 48 hours, inform the Fire Department of the length of time the resident will remain bedridden. (Appendix - Chapter 4, Section 425.2.3 2007 CFC)
2. Bedridden clients shall not be located above the first floor. (Appendix – Chapter 4, Section 425.3.4 2007 CFC)
3. Licensed facilities housing six or fewer children two years of age or younger and which do not have any non-ambulatory clients are not considered R-2 occupancies. (Section 308.5 2007 CBC)

Construction:

1. Walls and floors separating individual dwelling units within R-3.1 occupancies must be of one-hour fire resistive construction. If dwelling units are not equipped with cooking appliances other than microwave ovens, the separation may be by 1/2-inch gypsum wallboard and solid core doors. (Appendix – Chapter 4, Section 425.3.1)
2. R-3.1 occupancies shall not be of less than one-hour fire resistive construction throughout if they house clients above the first floor and there is more than 3,000 square feet of floor area above the first floor. (Section 425.3.4, 2007 CBC)
3. All exterior wall openings within 10 feet horizontally of an exterior exit stairway must be protected by fire rated assemblies having a 1-hour fire protection rating. Openings need not be protected when two separate exterior stairways serve an exterior exit balcony. (Exit Enclosure 1020.1.4 2007 CFC)
4. R-3.1 occupancies shall be provided with a non-rated floor separation which will prevent the smoke migration between floors. Construction shall be equivalent to 1/2-inch gypsum wallboard on one side of the wall studs. Openings shall be protected by positive latching, smoke gasketed doors that are automatic self-closing by smoke detection. A floor separation need not be provided if at least one exterior exit door is provided from each floor occupied by clients or if the building is protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system. (2007 CBC, Section 710.5.3, CFC Appendix 425.8.7)

Exits:

1. In R-3.1 occupancies of non-rated construction, bedrooms used by non-ambulatory clients shall exit to the exterior in one of the following methods: (2007 CFC, Appendix 425.8.3.2)
 - a. Through a corridor/hallway exiting directly to the exterior.
 - b. Through a corridor/hallway and into another bedroom, in the immediate area, which exits directly to the exterior. Illuminated exit signs shall be provided to identify the exit.
 - c. A direct exit door from the bedroom to the exterior.
 - d. An exit through an adjacent bedroom to the exterior.
2. Exits through adjoining dwelling units are not permitted. (2007 CFC - 1014.2.1)
3. Exits shall not pass through more than one intervening room. (2007 CFC - 1014.2)
4. Every sleeping room below the fourth story shall have a direct exit to the exterior. If the exit is by means of a rescue window, the window shall have net clear openable area of 5.7 feet. The minimum clear height of the opening shall not be less than 24 inches; the minimum clear width shall not be less than 20 inches. Finished sill height shall not be more than 44 inches above the floor. (2007 CFC - 1026.2 & 1026.3)
5. R-3.1 occupancies shall have a minimum two remotely located exits. Additional exits must be provided as for other occupancies. If constructed of not less than Type V, 1-hour construction and equipped with an automatic fire extinguishing system, only one exit may be required. (2007 CFC – Appendix 425.8.2 - 2007 CBC 1015.2.1)
6. Required exits shall not pass through kitchens, storerooms, closets or spaces used for similar purposes, such as garages. Exits may pass through kitchens that do not form separate rooms. (2007 CBC, Section 425.8.3.4)
7. The minimum clear width of corridors shall not be less than 36 inches in R-3.1 occupancies. (2007 CBC 1017.2)

8. Exit corridors may be interrupted by intervening rooms in R-3.1 occupancies. (2007 CFC – Appendix 425.8.3.4)
9. Regardless of the occupant load served, exit doors shall be openable from the inside without the use of a key or any special knowledge or effort. All locking devices and latches must release with a single motion. (2007 CFC 1008.1.8.5 & 1008.1.8.7)
10. A level and clear area is required on each side of all exit doors. The level area must have a length of not less than 44 inches in the direction of door swing as measured from the plane of the door. (2007 CFC 1008.1.5)
11. Within a building, changes in elevation of less than 12 inches along an exit serving an occupant load of more than 10 shall be by means of a ramp. (2007 CFC Section 425.8.5)
12. Changes in level up to ¼ inch may be vertical and without edge treatment. Changes in level between ¼ and ½ inch shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1 unit vertical in 2 units horizontal. Changes greater than ½ inch shall be accompanied by means of a ramp. (2007 CBC Section 425.8.5)
13. For R-3.1 each accessible means of egress shall be continuous from each required accessible occupied area to public way and shall include accessible routes, ramps, exit stairs, elevators, horizontal exits, or smoke barriers. (2007 CFC 1003.6 & 1007.2)
14. Stairways shall have a minimum width of 30-inches. Handrails may project up to 3 1/2 inches into the required width from each side. Trim may project into the required width 1-1/2 inches from each side. The rise of steps shall not be less than 4 inches nor greater than 8 inches. Run of steps shall not be less than 9 inches. (2007 CFC Appendix 425.8.6)
15. Stairways less than 36 inches in width may have one handrail. Stairways 44 inch or wider must have two handrails. (2007 CFC 1012.7)
16. R-3.1 occupancies may continue to use existing stairways if the stairways have a minimum width of 30 inches, a maximum rise of 8 inches and a minimum run of 9 inches. (2007 CFC Appendix 425.8.6.2)

Fire Protection:

1. Smoke detectors must be installed in all sleeping rooms and in all rooms or areas providing access to sleeping areas. A smoke detector must also be installed on each floor of the building, including basements. Detectors must sound an alarm audible in all sleeping areas of the dwelling unit in which they are installed. (2007 CBC 907.2.10.1.1 & 1.5 & 2.10.3)
2. In addition to smoke detectors, each R-3.1 occupancy shall be provided with at least one manual pull station. Said pull station shall activate a distinct fire alarm signal audible throughout the facility. These devices need not be interconnected to any other fire alarm device, electrically supervised or provided with emergency power. (2007 CBC 907.3.2.4)
3. R-3.1 occupancies exceeding 2 stories in height and housing non-ambulatory clients above the first floor or housing clients less than 18 years of age or over 65 years of age must be provided with automatic fire sprinklers. Sprinkler systems may be designed to NFPA 13R standards. Sprinklers must be installed throughout the facility, however. The exceptions allowed in section 2-6 of 13R do not apply. (2007 CBC 903.2.7 & CFC 425.7.1)
4. When the facility is required to be provided with fire sprinklers, both inside and outside alarm bells are required. (2007 CFC Appendix 425.7.1)

5. At least one fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2A-10BC shall be provided on each floor of every R-3.1 occupancy. (2007 CFC 906.5)

Other:

1. The amount of flammable and combustible liquids stored in R-3.1 occupancies shall not exceed the amounts needed for maintenance purposes or operation of equipment. (2007 CFC 3405.3.5.2)
2. On properties adjacent to forested areas, The following precautions must be taken
 - a. A 30-foot firebreak shall be maintained on all sided of the buildings.
 - b. Remove that portion of any tree that extends within 10 feet of the outlet of any chimney or stovepipe.
 - c. Remove all dead or dying portions of trees adjacent to or overhanging any building.
 - d. Maintain all roofs free of leaves, needles or other dead vegetative growth.
 - e. Provide a screen over the outlet of every chimney.
 - f. No combustible materials of any kind shall be placed or stored within 10 feet of any R-3.1 occupancy.
{3.07(a)&(b), Title 19}
3. No dry vegetation shall be permitted to exist within 20 feet or any R-3.1 occupancy. {3.19(e), T-19}
4. Only metal trash cans are permitted within R-3.1 occupancies {3.19(b), T-19}
5. Above ground gas meters and piping exposed to vehicular damage shall be protected by means of concrete filled steel pipes set into the ground or by other means approved by the Fire Department. (2007n CFC 312 & 603.9)
6. Chimneys on structures having non-rated roof coverings such as untreated wood shakes or shingles shall be equipped with spark arresters. (2007 CFC 603.6)
7. Approved numbers or addresses shall be placed on all new and existing buildings in such a position as to be plainly visible and legible from the street or road fronting the property. Said numbers shall be placed on a contrasting background. (2007 CFC 505)

If you have any questions, please contact the Fire Prevention Division for your area.

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