

Construction Requirements For Small Restaurants

Assembly occupancy is defined in the British Columbia Building Code as the “use of a building, or part thereof, by a gathering of persons for civic, political, travel, religious, social, educational, recreational or like purposes, or for the consumption of food or drink.” Final interpretation of the Building Code and its application to various uses in a building is the responsibility of the authority having jurisdiction. For several years, the City of Surrey’s policy for classifying whether a restaurant or coffee shop becomes an Assembly Group A-2 occupancy is when it is designed for over 10 patrons – if there are 10 or fewer seats, the occupancy may be classified as Mercantile Group E.

The City recognizes that the limit of 10 seats places an undue hardship on the small restaurant operator with respect to construction requirements. In many cases, a fire separation having a 2 h fire-resistance rating is required to separate a restaurant classified as Assembly from adjacent suites in a multi-tenant commercial building. Therefore, effective immediately, the City of Surrey will permit a maximum of 24 seats in a restaurant and still enable it to be classified as Mercantile Group E occupancy.

Requests for other uses in a building normally classified as Assembly, (such as business schools, dance schools, and music schools), to be classified as Mercantile Group E or Business and Personal Services Group D occupancies when it is designed for over 10 patrons, also may be considered. However, these are to be evaluated on a project by project basis.