



CODE ENFORCEMENT AGENCY
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Existing Commercial Occupancy Checklist

This helpful guide is intended to provide information to the applicant when considering a vacant structure, empty storefront, non-occupied commercial space, building or structure. Please note, due to the broad range of building designs, descriptions, use groups and location, this narrative is intended to be a helpful guide to communicate what the inspector usually requires when renewing or issuing a new certificate of occupancy.

“It is not the job of the inspector to impeded upon your progress but rather ensure the safety of the environment prior to occupancy”

Please NOTE, just because the area, building or structure had modifications, alterations, repairs, upgrades or installations in the past (prior to your application) this does not negate the minimum code standards and inspection requirements of this application for occupancy moving forward.

FIRE & PANIC

In today's terms the definition of fire and panic are very much two separate ideas. The proposed commercial structure or area should be surveyed by the applicant for up-to-date fire and panic standards under the International Fire Code, the local jurisdictional code or international property maintenance code. This may be beneficial to include outside professional services such as registered trade groups, established reputable commercial companies with defined experience or a design professional such as a Pennsylvania Architect or Engineer to help answer common questions and concerns with required upgrades that may be required by the Building Code Official.

- A) Detectors, suppression systems, pull stations, anslu systems, fire extinguishers and alarm system panels usually require annual inspectional and certifications.
- B) Exit lights, emergency lights, back up / battery power systems must be installed in all required locations and operate properly.
- C) Some areas require alarm system panels to be remotely monitored properly. (check with the jurisdiction)
- D) All exit doors, fire doors, separations and closures must be installed in all locations and operate properly.
- E) Are the area locations clearly marked with an exit strategy to get out quickly? Are they free from obstructions or device failure?

The best question to answer in a survey of this inspection is can the public get into and out of the entire area or building in a safe and timely manner without obstruction, mechanical interruption or failed devices. Remember, employees and guests are considered public.

Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing (MEP)

The applicant should consider the following when surveying the potential occupancy:

Electrical

- 1) Is the Electrical panel accessible, properly installed, clearly marked breakers / switches, safe from any openings and certified by a certified electrical inspector?
- 2) Does the defined area or building have proper grounding methods (GFCI or Arc Faults)?
- 3) Are all the junctions clearly marked and closed from open wires?
- 4) Are all the switches, outlets and breakers covered properly?
- 5) Are there any open wires or unsafe wiring?

**** Please NOTE any issues, upgrades or alterations shall require an immediate electrical permit issued by the Building Code Official and inspected properly by the local authorized inspector.**

Plumbing

- 1) Is there fresh potable water coming into the area or building?
- 2) Are there proper emergency shut off valves in place and in reach?
- 3) Is the temperature of the water properly calculated?
- 4) Is the wastewater being properly removed and sized properly from the building?
- 5) Are all the wasteway stacks and vents properly vented?
- 6) Are all the fixtures secured and operating properly?
- 7) Do you have the proper back flow prevention in place and certified?
- 8) Proper expansion tanks, pressure gauges and pop off valves operating?
- 9) Proper emergency drainage of installed systems?

Mechanical

- 1) Is the area or building defined with the proper mechanical processes such as heating and ventilation in all occupied areas as required by the code?
- 2) Is the system installed and operating properly by code?
- 3) Proper Shut offs, switches and installed outlets for emergency?
- 4) Are the systems properly maintained?
- 5) Are the pathways, storage areas, pads or roof tops accessible for inspection and maintenance? Are they safe?
- 6) Does the area perform proper exchanges of air? Including fresh air or tempered air?
- 7) Boiler properly inspected by the PA L&I Boiler division?
- 8) Vents properly installed and free of obstructions, debris or damage?
- 9) Gas or electric emergency shut offs?

Accessibility (VERY IMPORTANT)

The American with Disability Act (ADA) defines the code interpretations including the ANSI 117.1 (2017) version of the accessibility standards for building design and occupancy. The local Building Code Official (BCO) or inspector has **NO** interpretation on accessible variances in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. When considering a new area, building or structure, key components of the ADA may be required and upgrades including minimum ADA standards may be required prior to your occupancy certificate.

These such upgrades, details and information on design, implementation and variances **MUST** only be discussed with a Pennsylvania licensed Architect or Engineer. The local BCO and inspector has **NO** interpretation of the allowable limits or design of an existing commercial structure.

Should the BCO or inspector require you to properly upgrade to the minimum code standard with respect to ADA or any accessibility standard, you **MUST** retain a professional Pennsylvania Architect or Engineer for assistance, design and interpretations.

Exterior

- 1) Is the entire exterior perimeter safe and free from obstructions, debris or faulty equipment?
- 2) Is the exterior well illuminated and properly marked with signage?
- 3) Does the exterior have a visible address or location marker for 911?

Local jurisdictional permits, licensure and utility.

In addition to the Occupancy Inspection, most local jurisdictions require some additional information for local taxes, utility registration, license for particular groups (Health Certificates, Liquor License other Commonwealth applicable licenses).

Please check with your local community and apply properly for ALL required permits **FIRST!!**

Please **DO NOT** rely on misinformed facts or conclusions resulting in delays of inspections or occupancy. The local Building Code Official is available to help answer any code questions or facilitate code interpretations when called upon.

Legal Disclaimer – Occupancy

Civil contracts, lease agreements, point to point sales, tenant turnovers, owner exchanges and transfers of legal ownerships are not the responsibility of the local building department and as such legal advice, professional design recommendations, dispute resolutions or any other circumstance prohibiting your certificate from being issued is solely the responsibility of the applicant only.

Additional applicable PA UCC permits, licenses and requested information by the BCO is solely the responsibility of the applicant upon proper notification.