

303.3, 306.2

Occupancy Classification of Commercial Kitchens



International Code Council®

Commercial kitchen

CHANGE TYPE: Clarification

CHANGE SUMMARY: The appropriate occupancy classification of a commercial kitchen has been clarified based upon the kitchen's relationship, or lack of a relationship, to dining facilities.

2012 CODE: **303.3 Assembly Group A-2.** Assembly uses intended for food and/or drink consumption including, but not limited to:

- Banquet halls
- Casinos (gaming areas)
- Night clubs
- Restaurants, cafeterias, and similar dining facilities (including associated commercial kitchens)
- Taverns and bars

306.2 Moderate-hazard Factory Industrial, Group F-1. Factory industrial uses which are not classified as Factory Industrial F-2 Low Hazard shall be classified as F-1 Moderate Hazard and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Food processing and commercial kitchens not associated with restaurants, cafeterias, and similar dining facilities.
- (no changes to other uses on the list)

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: Commercial kitchens have historically been characterized as two different types, those that are directly associated with a restaurant or similar dining facility and those that are independent of any related dining area, such as a catering business. The appropriate occupancy classification of commercial kitchens has been clarified through text changes in three different areas of the code.

In Table 508.4 regulating separated occupancies, footnote d has been eliminated to help provide clarity to the classification of a commercial kitchen. The past presence of the footnote eliminating any required fire separation between a commercial kitchen and the restaurant seating area that it serves often led to a conclusion that the commercial kitchen needed to be classified differently than the associated dining area. It was occasionally assumed that if they were intended to both be classified as the same occupancy, that of the restaurant seating area, then there was no relevance to the footnote. However, common practice has always been to include the kitchen area as an extension of the restaurant seating area, causing both spaces to be considered as Group A-2, or Group B for smaller restaurants. In order to clarify the appropriate occupancy classification of the associated kitchen, the footnote has been deleted.

To further identify the classification of the two types of commercial kitchens, additional language has been added to the code listings of those uses classified as Group A-2 and Group F-1 occupancies. Commercial kitchens associated with restaurants, cafeterias, and similar dining facilities, are now considered as a portion of the Group A-2 occupancies classification. Extending this concept, a kitchen associated with a small

Group B restaurant would simply be classified as a portion of the Group B occupancy. Although a commercial kitchen does not pose the same types of hazards as an assembly use, the allowance for a similar classification has generally been considered as an appropriate decision. Where the commercial kitchen is not associated with a dining facility, such as a catering business, the kitchen is to be classified as a Group F-1 occupancy in the same manner as any other food processing operations.