

2009 IBC Q&A – Section 1604.5, Occupancy Category

Excerpt from 2009 IBC Table 1604.5: Occupancy Category of Buildings and Other Structures

Occupancy Category	Nature of Occupancy
IV	<p>Buildings and other structures designated as essential facilities, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group I-2 occupancies having surgery or emergency treatment facilities.• Fire, rescue, ambulance and police stations and emergency vehicle garages.• Designated earthquake, hurricane or other emergency shelters.• Designated emergency preparedness, communications and operations centers and other facilities required for emergency response.• Power-generating stations and other public utility facilities required as emergency backup facilities for Occupancy Category IV structures.• Structures containing highly toxic materials as defined by Section 307 where the quantity of the material exceeds the maximum allowable quantities of Table 307.1(2).• Aviation control towers, air traffic control centers and emergency aircraft hangars.• Buildings and other structures having critical national defense functions.• Water storage facilities and pump structures required to maintain water pressure for fire suppression.

Q: In Table 1604.5, Occupancy Category IV includes "Buildings and other structures designated as essential facilities, including but not limited to: Group I-2 occupancies having surgery or emergency treatment facilities." Who has the authority to "designate" a building as essential?

A: The code does not specify how or by whom essential facilities are to be designated as such. One suggestion is that a community's emergency preparedness planning authority is the appropriate body to address the question of what facilities are essential to disaster response and recovery. It is possible that in one community a facility could be deemed nonessential while in another community the same type of facility may be more important to disaster recovery efforts and warrant an essential facility designation. [\[16-16\]](#)