

## Section 422 *Ambulatory Care Facilities*

Ambulatory care facilities, often referred to as ambulatory surgery centers or day surgery centers, are defined in Chapter 2 as a building or portion of a building “used to provide medical, surgical, psychiatric, nursing or similar care on a less than 24-hour basis to individuals who are rendered incapable of self-preservation by the services provided.”

Classified as Group B occupancies, such facilities are generally regarded as moderate in hazard level due to their office-like conditions. However, additional hazards are typically present due to the presence of individuals who are temporarily rendered incapable of self-preservation due to the application of nerve blocks, sedation, or anesthesia.

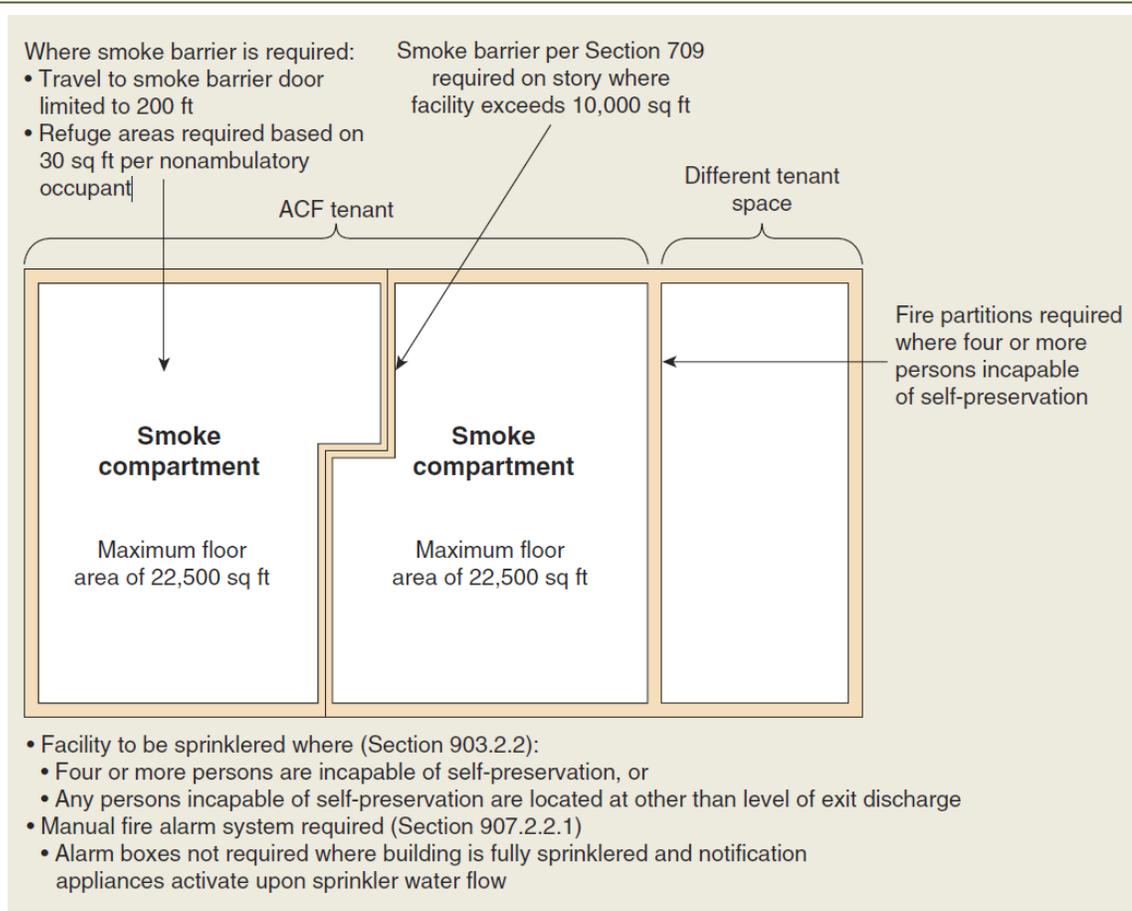
While the occupants may walk in and walk out the same day with a quick recovery time after surgery, there is a period of time where a potentially large number of people could require physical assistance in case of an emergency that would require evacuation or relocation.

Although classified as a Group B occupancy in the same manner as an outpatient clinic or other health-care office, an ambulatory care facility poses distinctly different hazards to life and fire safety, such as:

- Patients incapable of self-preservation require rescue by other occupants or emergency responders.
- Medical staff must stabilize the patient prior to evacuation, possibly resulting in delayed staff evacuation.
- Use of oxidizing medical gases such as oxygen and nitrous oxide.
- Potential for surgical fires.

As a result of the increased hazard level, additional safeguards have been put in place. Smoke compartments must be provided in larger facilities, and the installation of fire protection systems is typically mandated. See Figure 422-1.

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**Figure 422-1**  
**Ambulatory**  
**care facility.**

Any story containing ambulatory care facilities having more than 10,000 square feet (929 m<sup>2</sup>) of floor area must be subdivided into at least two smoke compartments by smoke barriers in accordance with Section 709. The limit on compartment size of 22,500 square feet (2,092 m<sup>2</sup>) may require that three or more smoke compartments be provided. Additional compartments may also be required due to travel distance limitations. Any point within a smoke compartment must be no more than 200 feet (60,960 mm) in travel distance from a smoke barrier door. Each smoke compartment must be large enough to allow for 30 square feet (2.8 m<sup>2</sup>) of refuge area for each nonambulatory patient. In addition, at least one means of egress must be available from each smoke compartment without the need to return back through the original compartment.

As a general rule, Group B occupancies do not require a sprinkler system based solely on their occupancy classification. However, Section 903.2.2 mandates that a Group B ambulatory care facility be provided with an automatic sprinkler system when either of the following conditions exist at any time:

- Four or more care recipients are incapable of self-preservation, or
- One or more care recipients who are incapable of self-preservation are located at other than the level of exit discharge.

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The extent of the sprinkler protection is detailed in Section 903.2.2. In addition, the fire alarm requirements are more stringent than those of other Group B occupancies. Section 907.2.2 requires the installation of a manual fire alarm system in all Group B fire areas containing an ambulatory health-care facility. The manual fire alarm boxes are not required if the building is fully sprinklered and the occupant notification appliances activate upon sprinkler water flow.

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