



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

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Office of the Fire Marshal Maximum Occupancy Calculations

****For Use During the COVID-19 State of Emergency Only****

The purpose of this document is to provide businesses a method to find a reasonable estimate of their maximum occupancy. During this COVID-19 State of Emergency the Howard County Office of the Fire Marshal will not be issuing maximum occupancy signs.

Maintaining occupancy levels at or less than the maximum occupancy shall, as always, remain the responsibility of the facility's management. All employees shall be included in the maximum occupancy.

Maximum Occupancy

- The total number of persons that are allowed to occupy a building or portion of a building at any one time.

****During the COVID State of Emergency, these numbers should be adjusted based on current guidelines.****

Mercantile Occupancy

- An occupancy used for the display and sale of merchandise.
- Restaurants and drinking establishments with an occupant load of fewer than 50 persons (as calculated prior to the COVID-19 emergency).

Business Occupancy

- An occupancy used for the transaction of business other than mercantile
- Business occupancies include: Doctor/Dentist's offices, Outpatient offices, Personal services including barber and beauty shops, Adult education, Dry cleaning and Laundry, Banks, Computer centers, General offices.

Assembly Occupancy

- An occupancy used for the gathering of 50 or more persons for worship, entertainment, eating, drinking, amusement, awaiting transportation or similar uses.
- An occupancy used for special amusement regardless of the number of persons.

Calculating the Maximum Occupancy

To figure your maximum occupancy you must determine the square footage of your space by multiplying its length times its width. Then divide the square footage per your type of occupancy.

Mercantile Occupancies

- For street level floor space, divide the square footage by 30.
- For floor space above the street level, divide the square footage by 60.
- Each floor shall be calculated separately. Each floors' maximum occupancy shall be adhered to separately.

Business Occupancies

- Divide the square footage by 100.

Assembly Occupancy

- Use the number already provide by the Office of the Fire Marshal if you have one, OR;
- Chairs only (Theater seating) - Divide the square footage by 7.
 - Tables and Chairs (Banquet seating) - Divide the square footage by 15.

Contact the Office of the Fire Marshal at howardfirecode@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-6040, with any questions concerning maximum occupancy.