



# Building Standards and Codes

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## TECHNICAL BULLETIN

**Code Effective Date:** October 31, 2017<sup>1</sup>  
**Source Document:** 19 NYCRR 1221—Building Construction<sup>2</sup>  
**Topic:** Fire Stations, Ambulance Corps, and Rescue Squads

This document provides clarification on the requirements of the 2015 International Building Code (2015 IBC) pertaining to how fire stations and similar uses are classified.

Based on the 2015 IBC and because of the diverse types of activities within a fire station, a single “blanket” use group is generally not appropriate. A fire station is therefore generally classified as a mixed-use building. Section 311.3 of the 2015 IBC, classifies the parking of vehicles as a Group S-2, low-hazard storage occupancy and Section 304 classifies the operational and administrative (office) areas as a Group B, business occupancy. In a fire station that does not have large assembly spaces (one greater than 750 sq. ft. or which has a capacity for 50 or more persons), and does not contain sleeping areas, S-2 and B may be sufficient to cover all areas including offices, dispatch rooms, apparatus bays, incidental storage, small assembly spaces, and ready (day) rooms.

When considering the mixed-use scenario of an S-2 and a B where the area outside the apparatus bay is not more than 10% of the floor area of the story in which it is located, the building could be constructed without fire separation pursuant to Section 508.2.4 of the 2015 IBC, since the Group B occupancy could be considered an accessory use. The opposite could also be true of a “headquarters building” that has a large office component and a single apparatus bay (less than 10% of the story) that could be considered an accessory use.

If a building has an assembly space that is calculated to have an occupant load of 50 or more persons or greater than 750 square feet in area, it shall be considered a Group A occupancy under Section 303 of the 2015 IBC. Examples of assembly spaces are multi-purpose rooms, meeting rooms, conference rooms, and bar areas. Generally, assembly occupancies within a fire station are considered use Group A-3 (Section 303.4, assembly uses intended for worship, recreation, or amusement and other assembly uses not classified elsewhere in Group A, i.e. *Community halls*).

Sleeping quarters in a fire station meet the definition of a Group R occupancy in Section 310.1 of the 2015 IBC. This would include areas such as *congregate living facilities*, where users share bathrooms or kitchen facilities and the occupants are transient in nature.

As with all occupancies, if the Group R portion of the fire station takes up less than 10% of the floor area of the story in which it is located, it can be considered accessory to the main use. Exception 2 to section 508.2.4 of the 2015 IBC does however, require Group R dwelling units and sleeping units to be separated in accordance with Section 420 of the 2015 IBC via fire partitions.

Regardless of whether portions of the building can be considered accessory uses, occupancy classification and all other code requirements of the accessory uses and primary uses such as means of egress, fire protection systems, plumbing

<sup>1</sup> The “Code Effective Date” for this Technical Bulletin is October 31, 2017, which is the effective date of the current version of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code (the Uniform Code).

<sup>2</sup> The 2015 International Building Code (2015 IBC) is a publication incorporated by reference in 19 NYCRR Part 1221. The 2017 Uniform Code Supplement is a publication incorporated by reference in 19 NYCRR Parts 1219 through 1228. The 2015 IBC, as amended by the 2017 Uniform Code Supplement, is part of the Uniform Code.

fixtures, and structural loads “...apply to each portion of the building based on the occupancy classification of that space.” per Section 508.2.1 of the 2015 IBC.

Regarding the apparatus bays, this area constitutes an enclosed parking garage and requires compliance with Section 406.6 of the 2015 IBC. Additionally, there are other provisions within the Uniform Code that are applicable. For example, the 2015 International Mechanical Code contains provisions including but not limited to:

- *Table 403.3.1.1 Minimum Ventilation Rates*
- *Section 404 Enclosed Parking Garage*
- *Section 502.14 Motor Vehicle Operation*

Additionally, there is no specific provision within the Uniform Code that requires a “fire station” to be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. However, many of the occupancies that can be found within a fire station may trigger the requirement, for example:

- Group A occupancies- A-3 occupancies with *an occupant load of 300 people or more, or located on a floor other than a level of exit discharge, or larger than 12,000 square feet*, shall have an automatic sprinkler system per Section 903.2.1 of the 2015 IBC. When an automatic sprinkler system is required for a group A occupancy, *the automatic sprinkler system shall be provided throughout the story where the fire area containing the Group A occupancy is located, and throughout all stories from the Group A occupancy to, and including, the levels of exit discharge.*
- Group R occupancies - Sleeping areas within fire stations and similar occupancies are required to be protected throughout the building by an automatic sprinkler system pursuant to Section 903.2.8 of the 2015 IBC. An NFPA 13R system would not be appropriate since this type of system is intended for *Low Rise Residential Occupancies* subject to the 2015 International Residential Code.
- Group S-2 occupancies - Parking areas for fire apparatus and similar vehicles fall under the requirements for *enclosed parking garages*. Section 903.2.10 of the 2015 IBC provides that *an automatic sprinkler system shall be provided throughout the building where either the fire area of the enclosed parking garage exceeds 12,000 square feet, or where it is located beneath other occupancies.*

The only method of construction that can limit the amount of floor area that is covered by an automatic sprinkler system is a fire wall pursuant to Section 706 of the 2015 IBC, which creates separate fire areas.

The information provided in this Technical Bulletin is not intended to cover all scenarios or uses that may occur within fire stations and similar occupancies. There is rarely one scenario that fits all buildings and code users need to look at each building and its intended use individually and compare it to the use and occupancy classifications of the 2015 IBC to make a determination.

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