

**NC Department of Insurance
Office of the State Fire Marshal - Engineering Division
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Reduced Occupant Loading

Code: 2012 Building Code
Section: 1004.1.1, Exception

Date: September 8, 2011

Question:

Is a letter from a building owner or his representative sufficient documentation to allow a reduction in the calculated occupant load for a building or calculated occupant load for part of a building for purposes of egress?

Answer:

No. The code enforcement official has no means of verifying that the occupant load limit stated in a building owner's letter is maintained over the life of the business or building. A reduced occupant load below the calculated load should not be approved unless the reduction can be justified by:

- A license restriction from a government agency such as DHHS or DPI that limits the quantity of occupants, or
- The code enforcement official can substantiate from his professional experience with the facility that the occupant load is expected to be less than the calculated load.

Adequate egress is one of the most important means of protecting occupants from a hazardous event in a building. The building code affords by static means a certain level of safety to the general public by establishing minimum safety standards. It would be a violation of public trust to allow a fluid situation that could violate the minimum safety standards of the code.

Keywords:

Plumbing fixtures, plumbing count, plumbing fixture count