



## **NYC adopts International Fire Code: Impact on public assembly, retail and educational facilities**

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On July 1, 2008, New York City adopted the International Fire Code. There is a one-year grace or transition period before the code is enforceable. Starting July 1, 2009, the city can issue violations to owners who have not yet complied with the new law. The code is far-reaching and addresses virtually every facet of fire safety. For purposes of this discussion, we will examine the implications of the new code on selected occupancies and the new requirements for fire safety and evacuation plans.

First of all, the occupancy codes have been revised:

- \* Formerly, class F public assembly is now class A (assembly)
- \* Formerly, class E office buildings is now class B (business)
  - Classroom space above the 12th grade is now considered class B educational
- \* Formerly class M mercantile (retail) is now class C (commercial)
- \* Formerly class J residential is now class R (residential)
- \* Class I, institutions, includes occupancies such as nursing homes, assisted care facilities, hospitals and prisons. Based on the capabilities and degree of restraint required of the occupants, the classifications are I-1 through I-4
- \* Group E now includes schools, educational facilities and day care facilities.

The greatest number of entities will likely be impacted by the new fire code's section FC 404 - "Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans and Emergency Action Plans." This requires that entities not previously required to have fire safety plans will now have to develop them, train staff and in some cases conduct drills.

**New Requirement - Class A occupancies, which include, but are not limited to: restaurants; bars; theaters; gyms; art galleries; museums; auditoriums; concert halls; exhibition halls; bowling alleys; and funeral homes are now required to have their own fire safety and evacuation plan. Additionally these businesses are required to designate a fire safety trainer and conduct safety training for their staff.**

There are few changes to the class B - office buildings. They are still required to have fire safety and evacuation plans and emergency action plans.

However, group B - educational facilities (new requirement) must now have a fire safety and evacuation plan.

**New Requirement - Class M - occupancies, which include retail facilities that, in total employ 25 people or more, or are occupied or designed to be occupied by more that 500 people on one or more floors or more than 100 people on floors other than street level, must have a fire safety and evacuation plan. Additionally, employees must be trained in fire safety.**

**New Requirement - Class I occupancies are required to create a fire safety and evacuation plan,**

and conduct periodic training and drills, depending on the specific I classification.

New Requirement - The following properties, regardless of occupancy codes are now required to have fire safety plans and in some cases emergency action plans:

- \* Buildings or parts thereof equipped with a fire alarm system with voice communication of the type required in class B, R-1 or M occupancies, regardless of whether such a system is required.
- \* Buildings with an atrium and containing a group A, E or M occupancy
- \* Covered malls exceeding 50,000 s/f in aggregate floor area.

What is in the plans?

The fire safety plans for the above occupancies must include:

- \* Procedures in case of fire, for example: Who is in charge? Who contacts the fire department? Who directs occupants?
- \* A site plan
- \* Floor plans including specific annotations, such as exits, evacuation routes, areas of refuge, access and convenience stairs, fire warden phones and standpipe hose outlets.
- \* Designation of a fire safety trainer
- \* Procedures for accounting for people after evacuation or relocation.
- \* Procedures for accounting for people with special needs.

Training

Periodic training must be conducted, but the frequency of training depends on the occupancy.

- \* Class A - Quarterly
- \* Class B - Annually
- \* Class C - Annually
- \* Class E - Annually
- \* Class I - Monthly or bi-monthly depending on the specific occupancy

There are hundreds of pages that go into great detail describing the code and detailing the specific requirements for safety plans. The requirements above are only a starting point. For additional detail and information go to the FDNY web site: [www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/home2.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/home2.shtml)

Search for "new fire code" for the details.

The new requirements are meant to make NYC a safer place to live, work and enjoy. The plans should be developed to the level of detail and confidence that will provide an effective plan in case of an emergency.

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