

Sacramento Valley Association of Building Officials  
Committee-Supported Responses to the Question of the Month  
April 2009

1. The front door of a single-family dwelling has a landing outside the front door (which swings in and is the only door serving the dwelling). What is the maximum permitted height of the door threshold above the exterior landing?
  - a. 7.75"
  - b. 7.0"
  - c. **0.5"**

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE:** Although the exception to CBC Section 1008.1.6 would allow up to 7 ¾" in some cases, in this question the front door is the only exit and is therefore part of the required egress. The exception does not apply.

2. For a building project that proposes to change the occupancy classification of an existing unreinforced masonry building from an S-1 occupancy to an R-1 occupancy building, does your jurisdiction permit the building to be constructed per the minimum requirements of the 2007 CA Existing Building Code (Part 10 of Title 24)?
  - a. yes
  - b. **no**

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE: No.** The CA BSC adopts only Appendix A of the 2006 International Existing Building Code, not the IEBC itself as the 2007 CA Existing Building Code. Appendix A only applies to unreinforced masonry bearing walls.

The 2001 CBC was very simple, but also very subjective in evaluating the change of use of existing buildings. When changing occupancy, 2001 CBC Section 3405 required the existing building to comply with the current code for the proposed use, with the exception that the building official could approve the change provided the proposed use would be less hazardous (based on life and fire risk) than the existing use. The 1997 Uniform Code for Building Conservation (Table 5-A) ranked occupancy groups in levels of risks for five different risk categories. Although the UCBC was not adopted in California, Table 5-A was very useful as a guide for building officials evaluating risk associated with a change of use.

Section 3406 of the 2007 CBC has very similar language to Section 3405 of the 2001 CBC but the language has been supplemented by Section 3406.4 for seismic provisions. In addition, the 2007 CBC now includes Section 3410 (Compliance Alternatives) which contains a quantitative procedure for evaluating life and fire risks, eliminating use of Table 5-A in the 1997 UCBC. If there are no changes proposed to the structure and no increase to the loading imposed on the structure, then Section 3406.4 should govern. Note that the occupancy categories referenced by Section 3406.4 are defined by Table 1604.5. Whether changing from an S-1 to either a B or R-1 Occupancy the occupancy category of Table 1604.5 should not change. Therefore, the change of use by itself does not create a requirement to use 2007 CA Existing Building Code unless required by a local ordinance or the building has been declared to be a dangerous building. A voluntary upgrade of a URM structure should be encouraged, and should be designed and constructed using the provisions of the 2007 CEBC.

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3. For a building project that proposes to change the occupancy classification of an existing unreinforced masonry building from an S-1 occupancy to a B occupancy building, does your jurisdiction permit the building to be constructed per the minimum requirements of the 2007 CA Existing Building Code (Part 10 of Title 24)?
- a. yes
  - b. no**

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE: No.** See response to No. 2 above.

4. A tenant space in a vacant industrial building is proposed to be used as a business providing ballet lessons. The space is divided into four rooms approximately equal. The occupant load in each room is fewer than 50, but the accumulated occupant load is over 50. The designer is classifying the tenant space as a Group B Occupancy. Do you agree?
- a. yes**
  - b. no

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE: Yes,** provided this is for scheduled classes (rather than drop-ins), and the space will not be used for assembly purposes (i.e., no events with spectators)

5. What occupant load factor would you use for the ballet areas in the tenant space in question 4 above?
- a. 7 ft<sup>2</sup>/occupant
  - b. 15 ft<sup>2</sup>/occupant
  - c. 20 ft<sup>2</sup>/occupant
  - d. Other, list in comment section below
  - e. 50 ft<sup>2</sup>/occupant**

**COMMITTEE RESPONSE: e.** After considerable discussion, the committee believes that 50 ft<sup>2</sup>/occupant (exercise room) is appropriate for ballet lessons.