

Business Occupancy - Group B

2025 California Building Code §304 - Offices, professional services and related uses

Purpose. Group B generally covers office, professional, service and transaction uses where the primary hazard is typical of administrative, professional or service work rather than assembly, manufacturing, storage or high-hazard operations.

1. Typical Group B Uses

- Offices, banks, civic administration and professional services such as architects, attorneys, engineers, dentists and physicians.
- Barber/beauty shops, post offices, car washes, motor-vehicle showrooms and similar service uses.
- Higher education uses for students above the 12th grade, including qualifying higher-education laboratories.
- Testing, research and instructional laboratories that remain within Group B limits.
- Ambulatory care facilities and outpatient clinics that meet Group B classification criteria, subject to CBC §422.
- Small food-processing establishments or commercial kitchens not associated with dining facilities when within the CBC size limitation.
- Training and skill-development uses such as tutoring, martial arts or gymnastics when not classified as Group A.

Code reference: 2025 CBC §304.1

2. Important Boundaries

- A room used for assembly may become Group A when the assembly thresholds and use conditions in CBC §303 are met.
- K-12 educational uses are generally Group E, while post-secondary education is generally Group B.
- Manufacturing/processing can shift a use to Group F; storage-dominant uses can shift to Group S.
- Hazardous-material quantities above the permitted control-area limits can trigger Group H classification.
- Higher-education laboratories have additional requirements under CBC §428.
- Lithium-ion or lithium-metal battery testing, research and development is specifically recognized in Group B, but it carries additional fire-alarm and hazard controls.

Code reference: 2025 CBC §§303-307, 304.3 and 428

3. Examples of Spaces That Need Closer Review

- Medical/dental offices with sedation or occupants unable to self-preserve.
- Training studios with large occupant loads or spectator areas.
- Commercial kitchens over the Group B size/use limitation or associated with restaurants.
- Research laboratories using hazardous materials near or above maximum allowable quantities.
- Battery testing/R&D areas involving thermal runaway, energy storage, charging or hazardous production processes.

4. Fire & Life-Safety Review Considerations

- Verify the actual use of each room, tenant space and outdoor/rooftop area; a building can contain more than one occupancy group.
- Determine occupant load and means-of-egress requirements under CBC Chapter 10.
- Evaluate automatic sprinkler and fire alarm requirements under CBC/CFC Chapter 9.
- Check allowable building height/area, construction type and occupancy separation requirements under CBC Chapters 5 through 7.
- Maintain required fire department access, water supply, addressing, key-box access and fire protection equipment access as applicable.
- Changes in use or occupancy can trigger a new code analysis even when little or no construction work is proposed.
- Every Group B building used for educational purposes can have California-specific fire-alarm requirements; evaluate CBC/CFC §907.2.2.3 where applicable.

Code reference: 2025 CBC Chapters 5-10; 2025 CFC Chapters 5, 9 and applicable occupancy/hazard chapters

Primary References

References: 2025 California Building Code §304 - Business Group B; 2025 California Fire Code §203.3 - Business Group B; 2025 CBC §§422 and 428 for special Group B uses; 2024 International Building Code Chapter 3

Final requirements depend on the actual use, occupant load, building size and construction, mixed occupancies, hazardous materials and fire-protection systems. The fire/building code official makes the final occupancy-classification determination.