

Laboratory Occupancy - Group L

California-specific occupancy - 2025 California Building Code §313 and §453

Purpose. California Group L is a special laboratory occupancy for buildings or portions containing one or more laboratory suites regulated under CBC §453. It is distinct from ordinary Group B laboratories and Group H high-hazard occupancies.

1. What Group L Means

Group L is specifically recognized by the California State Fire Marshal. It is used for qualifying laboratory suites as defined and regulated by CBC §453.

A laboratory is not automatically Group L. Depending on the use, hazardous-material quantities and compliance path, a laboratory can be Group B, Group L or Group H.

Code reference: 2025 CBC §313.1; CBC §453

2. B vs. L vs. H Laboratory Classification

Code reference: 2025 CBC §§304, 307, 313 and 453

Classification	General concept	Key issue
Group B laboratory	Testing, research, instructional or higher-education laboratory within the applicable Group B provisions	Hazardous materials remain within the applicable limits/special laboratory provisions
Group L laboratory suite	California-specific laboratory-suite compliance path under §453	Suite design, hazardous-material limits, fire protection and laboratory-specific safeguards
Group H laboratory/process	Hazardous-material quantities/process hazards exceed allowed thresholds or meet Group H criteria	High-hazard construction and CFC hazardous-material requirements

3. Fire/Life-Safety Features Commonly Reviewed

- Laboratory-suite boundaries and the number/location of suites.
- Hazardous-material inventory by laboratory, control area or suite as applicable.
- Automatic sprinkler systems and standpipe requirements where triggered by §453/Chapter 9.
- Fire-resistance-rated construction and door protection.
- Exhaust ventilation, gas cabinets, exhausted enclosures and emergency controls.
- Emergency alarm/detection systems, including special hazards such as lithium battery research.
- Chemical storage cabinets, compatible storage, spill control and emergency response information.

Code reference: 2025 CBC §453; CBC/CFC Chapters 9 and 50

4. California-Specific Note

Because Group L is a California amendment, model IBC references alone are not sufficient for classification. Use the adopted California Building Code and California Fire Code when evaluating a laboratory in California.

Primary References

References: 2025 California Building Code §313 - Laboratories Group L; 2025 California Building Code §453 - Group L; 2025 California Fire Code §203.12 - Laboratories Group L; 2025 CBC §§304 and 307 for Group B and Group H laboratory alternatives

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.