
Occupant Load Permits: Memorandum to Applicants

This letter is provided as general guidance only and is not intended to be exhaustive. It is intended to assist applicants in preparing and submitting an Occupant Load (FI) Permit application with the City of Vancouver. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all submissions are complete and comply with all applicable City of Vancouver requirements and regulations.

Taking additional time to ensure your application is complete and accurate prior to submission will help reduce review delays. Applications submitted with deficiencies may require multiple rounds of revisions, which can significantly increase overall processing time.

Information in this letter is supplementary to Bulletin 2020-002-FI found on the City of Vancouver website.

Applications enter the queue for processing once all the following requirements are met:

STEP 1 - Review City of Vancouver Requirements

A) Visit the City of Vancouver website and search “Occupant Load Permit.” Review all applicable requirements, bulletins, and guidance materials before preparing your submission.

B) If your application includes outdoor seating or patios, review the following:

- Street Activities (SA) permits for patios located on City property (e.g., sidewalk patios and curbside patios)
- Development Permit (DP) and/or Building Permit (BP/DB), if required, for patios located on private property.

Ensure that approved drawings under any SA permit match the proposed layout submitted for the occupant load application in terms of size and placement.

The Occupant Load (FI) Permit establishes the maximum number of persons permitted within a space.

*** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ***

STEP 2 - Confirm Base Approvals

A) Ensure the space has the appropriate approvals in place prior to submission:

- Building Permit (BP/DB) (issued or completed, if applicable)
- Development Permit (DP) (if applicable and valid)
- Street Activities Permit (SA) (if applicable and valid)

B) Applicants are responsible for confirming that any Development Permit (DP) and/or Street Activities (SA) Permit are valid and not expired at the time of application.

C) A current business licence is required to proceed with your permit. If not yet issued by the Licencing Office, verification will be required that the licence will be issued before proceeding with your Occupant Load (FI) Permit.

D) The proposed floorplan layout must be consistent with all approved permits.

For patios, ensure any Development Permit (DP), Building Permit (BP/DB), and/or Street Activities Permit (SA) related to private patios is issued and aligned with the proposed layout prior to applying.

STEP 3 - Prepare Floor Plans

Acquiring the services of a professional architect or designer is strongly recommended

A) Submit clear and legible floor plans that include:

- Name of establishment and address
- All rooms and spaces labeled
- Dimensions and floor layout
- Seating layouts (tables, chairs, fixed seating, and standing areas)
- Furniture sizes that reflect actual dimensions and layout
- Marked exits, exit paths, and door swing direction
- Washrooms, including plumbing fixtures (e.g., toilets and sinks)
- Back-of-house areas and kitchen layouts, including major equipment and appliances

*** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ***

Clearly identify interior and exterior areas on the same floorplan. Plans must reflect the actual or intended layout and align with approved permits: Development Permit (DP), Building Permit (BP/DB), and/or Street Activities Permit (SA).

B) Minimum Drawing Requirements:

- Drawings must be clear, legible, and to-scale
- Straight-line drawings only; hand-drawn or sketch-style drawings are not acceptable
- Clean black and white (no colour, red-line markups, or hatch-marks/shadings)
- Do not identify liquor service areas, as this is reviewed and determined by LCRB
- Provide sufficient dimensions to verify scale and accuracy
- Patios must be shown on the same floor plan and at the same scale as the interior

STEP 4 - Complete Occupant Load Calculations (Form 1)

A) All applications must include a completed Form 1 application form, found on the “Get an Occupant Load Permit” page on the City of Vancouver website.

- Identify each Room/Area or Furniture layout separately (ex. Dining Area, Bar, Lounge, Patio)
- Complete calculations for each of the four Criteria that determine occupant load:
 - Criteria #1 – Indicate the presence of a Fire Alarm
 - Criteria #2 - Determine the design occupant load based on number/type of washrooms (VBBL 3.7.2.2.)
 - Criteria #3 – Determine net floor space capacity.
 - Criteria #4 – Calculate maximum exit capacity based on egress/exit widths.
- Determine maximum occupant load for each Room/Area based on the most restrictive of the four criteria.
- Form 1 applications must be filled out completely, including associated permit numbers (BP/DB, DP, SA), contact information, and official applicant signature.

*** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ***

STEP 5 - Verify Exiting and Life Safety Compliance

A) The proposed occupant load must be supported by exiting and life safety systems. Key considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Presence of a Fire Alarm
- Number of exits
- Exit width and capacity
- Door swing direction (required where occupant load exceeds 60)
- Panic hardware (typically required where occupant load exceeds 100)
- Travel distance and exit access

B) The final approved occupant load may differ from submitted calculations as determined by the Fire Prevention Officer.

STEP 6 - Coordinate with Other Approvals

A) Ensure consistency with approvals such as:

- Business licence
- Liquor licence (if applicable)
- Street Activities permits (SA)
- Development Permits (DP)
- Building Permits (BP/DB)

Please note that all layouts and occupant loads must align across submissions, including matching SA drawings.

B) Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) cannot provide guidance on requirements or processes administered by other City departments. For questions related to business licences, Building Permits (BP/DB), Development Permits (DP), or Street Activities (SA) Permits, contact the appropriate department directly.

*** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ***

STEP 7 - Submit Application

A) Submit the following documents in the permitting portal:

- Completed Form 1 (Occupant Load Permit application)
- Floor plans
- Any supporting documents

B) Incomplete or inconsistent submissions may not be accepted and will delay processing.

STEP 8 - Address Deficiencies as Required

A) Incomplete applications will be sent back to the applicant for revisions. All comments must be addressed fully, and revised documents must be resubmitted.

STEP 9 - Approval and Posting Requirements

A) Once approved:

- The applicant will receive the following documents within the permitting portal:
 - Issued Occupant Load Permit
 - Stamped Occupant Load Certificate
 - Stamped Floor Plan
 - Stamped Form 1

**** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ****

- The occupant load represents the maximum number of persons permitted within each area, including staff
- Occupant Load values awarded for exterior patios will not add to the maximum allowable of interior spaces.
- Copies of the Stamped Occupant Load Certificate and Stamped Floor Plan are required to be posted in a conspicuous location when the occupant load exceeds 60 persons or where alcohol is being served.

B) The space must operate in accordance with the approved occupant load(s) at all times.

This document is intended to serve as general guidance for the preparation and submission of an Occupant Load Permit application with the City of Vancouver. It is not exhaustive in scope and does not constitute, imply, or predetermine approval, conditional approval, or denial of any application. All complete applications will be reviewed in accordance with established timelines.

Please refer to Bulletin 2020-002-FI (Maximum Occupant Load Calculations) for context.

**** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ****