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Change-in-use

The Minnesota State Building Code provides minimum standards for creating an environment of health and safety for all Minnesota residents.

A **change-in-use** occurs whenever an existing building is used in a manner that is different than its prior use. For example, if an office building is vacated and a retailer moves into the building, a change-in-use has occurred. Whenever a change-in-use occurs, the building may need to be updated in order to make the building safe for the new use. This handout outlines some of the common changes that may need to be made when a change-in-use occurs.

The following items may be required in order to meet current code:

1. **Handicapped accessibility**, including:
 - handicapped ramps and entrances,
 - an elevator with handicapped accessibility; and
 - a handicapped accessible restroom.
2. **Enclosure of vertical shafts** to prevent the rapid spread of fire from one area to another.
3. **Exits** that are clearly marked at all doors, hallways and stairs. Additional exits may also be required based upon the occupancy load of the proposed use.
4. **Stand pipes** in buildings of four stories or taller.
5. **Smoke detectors** for dwelling units or hotels.
6. **Separations** consisting of rated fire walls for buildings with two or more different uses.
7. **Sprinklers and easy basement access** in order to ensure the safety of the public, as well as the safety of rescue officials.
8. An **off-street parking permit** may be required due to the fact that parking needs often change with a change-in-use. It may be necessary to apply for or amend an existing off-street parking permit in order to operate your proposed use. (Through the off-street parking permit process, you may learn about the building and fire code regulations that might apply.)

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This handout is written as a guide to common questions and problems.
It is not intended nor shall it be considered a complete set of requirements.

Change-in-use (continued)

Note: Changes in the use of a building may not be obvious. Uses are divided into occupancy classes by the building code. Requirements vary depending on the use, occupancy class, or square footage of the building. Contact the Building Official to find the occupancy class of your proposed use.

All codes have been taken from the official publication of the International Council of Building Officials (ICBO) and the Minnesota State Accessibility Code. The International fire codes and the International Building codes are generalizations.

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