

Life Safety/Code Summary Sheet

Code Summary Sheets/Life Safety Summary Sheets. They aren't in the Building Code; there are no rules as to their content; and they are becoming popular among Code officials as time goes on. From a plan review perspective, they are very helpful, especially when one is reviewing a complicated building. Are they needed for every project? No. But government prefers working with 'one size fits all'. So, how does one prepare a Code Summary Sheet?

Elements of a Code Summary Sheet

1. Egress Paths
2. Construction Type
3. Occupancies
4. Allowable Area Calcs
5. Occupant Loads
6. Building History
7. Plumbing Fixture Count

The more complicated the building, the easier it is to review, when one has one diagram or sheet, that summarizes the various components of the building.

This structure was constructed over a period of years. The original structure is the N-S portion to the right of the sheet; an E-W addition was created a few years later; and a third portion, on a separate tax lot, filled in the L to make a rectangle. The two retail tenants in the western half of the second structure were created when the addition occurred. At the time of my client's purchase of the building, the wall between the first and second portions had been removed.

In my opinion, the most useful aspect of the Life Safety Summary Sheet is a diagram of the Egress Paths. The need for this information varies with the design of the building. In many designs, the egress path is obvious; however, it helps to have the Egress Paths shown on a single sheet. The International Code model is a more flexible design tool than the Uniform Code model used to be; from a plan review perspective it can be a more complicated tool. The concept of "Non-Separated Occupancies" makes a diagram of a building, and the methods used for protecting these Occupancies, necessary.

From a historical perspective, there is little difference between a B Occupancy and an M Occupancy. However, the International Code model does create some distinct differences between the two Occupancies. While this building was for years a B Occupancy, and while a B Occupancy restaurant had been added to the building, the tenants of the restaurant wanted to add a bar area with an Occupant Load exceeding 49; thus creating an A2 Occupancy. The relationship between the B Occupancy areas of the building and the total area of the building was such that an A2 Occupancy could not be created unless the A2 portion was considered as a separate Fire Area. The bar patrons were able to access this portion of the facility from the restaurant by traveling through a rated Corridor and through a rated Fire Door.

In many jurisdictions, the Change in Occupancy from B to M or vice-versa, can be an 'opportunity' for the Authority Having Jurisdiction to require that the building be upgraded to more closely resemble a current-Code-compliant structure. In terms of seismic bracing, this can be an expensive proposition. Accessibility upgrades are limited to 25% of the budget; but seismic upgrades do not necessarily have a similar limitation.

A curious feature of the building is the Property Line on the north end of the building, located 10ft from the building wall, adjacent to the parking area on the north side of the building. This sidewalk was considered an Exit Passageway, due to its proximity to the adjacent Property Line. Even though it was extremely unlikely that the adjacent parcel would ever be developed for any use besides parking, the openings on the north side of the building required a fire rating and a Building Code Appeal. The City of Portland requires issues regarding Alternate Materials and Methods to be decided by an administrative Appeals process.

