

**SDCI**

**Director's Rule XX-2016**

<b>Applicant:</b>  City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections	<b>Page</b>  1 of 5	<b>Supersedes:</b>  N/A
	<b>Publication:</b>  X/XX/16	<b>Effective:</b>  X/XX/16
<b>Subject:</b>  Emergency Shelters	<b>Code and Section Reference:</b>  Seattle Building Code SMC 22.100 Seattle Existing Building Code SMC 22.110	
	<b>Type of Rule:</b>  Code Modification	
	<b>Ordinance Authority:</b>  SMC 3.06.040	
<b>Index:</b>  Building Code	<b>Approved Date</b>  (signature on file) _____ <u>XX</u> Nathan Torgelsen, Director	

**BACKGROUND:**

This rule explains the Department's application of code provisions to shelter facilities. The need for emergency shelter is great due to our homelessness crisis. These types of facilities are unique, and warrant different treatment in the construction regulatory process. While basic life safety requirements must be met, with the approval of the Building Official and the Fire Marshal, Building and Fire code modifications are allowed, as long as a reasonable degree of safety is provided.

Shelter facilities, though they include people who are sleeping, do not fit well into typical residential occupancy categories. Shelters are supervised while the occupants are sleeping, and full cooking facilities are not allowed. Shelters are required to provide features that ensure the occupants can easily get out of the building in an emergency.

Although there are provisions in the Seattle Existing Building Code (SEBC Section 407 and Section 1001.1) indicating that an occupancy change warrants full compliance, other sections allow flexibility for unique circumstances. For existing buildings, SEBC Section 101.11 allows relief from specific requirements that are determined to be impractical, and SEBC Section 101.12 allows the building official to modify the requirements of the code when there are practical difficulties and the modification meets the intent of the code and provides a reasonable degree of safety.

## RULE

### A. Classification of Shelters

Shelters are classified as one of the following two types of facilities, Limited Use Emergency Shelters and Other Emergency Shelters.

Limited Use Emergency Shelters meet the following criteria:

1. Shelters with 50 or fewer beds and limited hours of operation.  
Example:
  - overnight shelter only and operates year round OR
  - day center with a seasonal overnight shelter
2. Shelters with 20 or fewer beds. Based on the limited occupancy, these smaller shelters do not have limits on the hours of operation or seasonal limits.
3. Shelters with 50 to 100 beds under the following conditions:
  - The building is equipped with a sprinkler system throughout.or
  - The shelter is night-time, seasonal use only; and
  - There is a combination of building features that enhances life safety.  
Example:
    - Enhanced exiting features such as
      - additional exiting capacity beyond what is required by the code
      - Exits with direct access to outside
    - Fire alarms
    - Noncombustible type of construction

Shelters that do not fall into the category of Limited Use Emergency Shelter are considered Other Emergency Shelters. For example:

- Day centers with a year round overnight shelter with >20 beds
- Seasonal shelters with >50 beds that do not meet the Limited Use Emergency Shelter criteria #3
- Shelters with >100 beds

Any of the following shelter or building characteristics would also designate the shelter as an Other Emergency Shelter:

- Extensive alterations are being done to an existing building
- Locating the shelter in a building that has been vacant for more than 2 years
- Locating the shelter in a building that is newly constructed, or as an initial tenant improvement in a new building

All shelters in the building will be included for the purpose of determining the number of beds for shelter classification.

## B. Regulations for Shelters

### **Limited Use Emergency Shelters**

Limited Use Emergency Shelters shall satisfy the following requirements:

#### 1. Egress

- Two well-separated exits, readily visible from the sleeping room
- Shelter shall be located within one level of the ground floor
- Exit lights per Seattle Building Code (SBC) Section 1006
- Exit signs per SBC 1011
- Access to exits for all building occupants shall be maintained whenever the shelter is occupied

#### 2. Emergency Systems

- Carbon monoxide detectors per SBC 908.7
- Interconnected smoke alarms covering the shelter space and adjacent spaces. Battery operated is acceptable. Must be UL listed smoke alarms with sealed non-removable 10-year batteries.
- Class 2A rated fire extinguisher within 75 feet of all portions of the shelter. Additional fire extinguishers as determined by the Seattle Fire Department (SFD).

- Posting of a fire safety and emergency plan per the Seattle Fire Code (SFC) Section 404 that contains the following:
  - A floor plan or diagram showing emergency egress or escape routes and exits, portable fire extinguishers, and (where provided) areas of refuge, fire alarm manual pulls, control panel, or annunciator.
  - The procedure for reporting a fire (call 9-1-1) or other emergency.
  - The means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.
  - Procedures for assisted rescue for persons with disabilities.
  - A procedure for accounting for occupants after evacuation has been completed.
  - Contact information of personnel or staff who can provide further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

### 3. Shelter Policies and Operational Standards

- Provide supervision of the shelter through the sleeping hours. Supervision shall ensure continuous and systematic surveillance of the shelter for the purposes of identifying and controlling fire hazards, detecting early signs of fire, raising an alarm in the event of a fire and notifying the fire department.
  - i. Supervision shall be performed by at least one awake, alert adult for every 25 beds. Awake supervision is not required for 10 or fewer beds.
  - ii. Supervision shall be performed by a person knowledgeable with shelter policies, the layout of the building and the fire safety and emergency plan.
  - iii. Record of this supervision shall be maintained in a log with entries no greater than every 30 minutes.
  - iv. Supervision can be provided by a shelter resident, a volunteer or shelter staff.
  - v. Supervision may be shared by more than one person through the sleeping hours as long as the supervision is continuous.
- Have a telephone available to call 9-1-1.
- Use of commercial cooking appliances in the building is not permitted during sleeping hours. Warming ovens or residential-type stove tops used for warming food are allowed.

- No smoking inside the building.
- No tolerance policy to drinking or drug use onsite, threats of violence, etc.
- Operational standards to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.

#### 4. Occupancy classification

The sleeping area and accessory spaces of a Limited Use Emergency Shelter shall be permitted to have the same occupancy classification as was last permitted for the space. Areas used for assembly purposes will be classified as assembly uses.

#### 5. Pre-submittal conference.

A pre-submittal conference is required for all Limited Use Emergency Shelters. In addition to the typical SDCI permit submittal requirements the applicant shall include a description of the anticipated use, program synopsis, and operational standards as noted above as part of the permit documents.

Limited Use Emergency Shelter will not require the following:

- Fire sprinklers are not required for the sleeping area and accessory spaces unless required for a new assembly use.
- The HVAC system need not be altered to comply with current code.
- Requirements for change of occupancy in the Seattle Energy Code and the Seattle Mechanical Code need not be met.
- No building envelope improvements will be required for an existing heated space.

### **Other Emergency Shelters**

Other Emergency Shelters in existing buildings shall satisfy the following requirements:

- The requirements for Limited Use Emergency Shelters apply.
- The sleeping area and any accessory areas of the shelter shall be considered a residential Group R-1 occupancy.
- The change of occupancy for the sleeping area and any accessory areas of the shelter may trigger substantial alteration requirements per SEBC 303.1.1, item #3. The building shall conform to the requirements of SEBC 303.1.

- The shelter cannot be located in an unreinforced masonry building that has not been retrofitted.
- All portions of the shelter shall comply with the accessibility provisions in the SEBC.

Other Emergency Shelters in newly constructed buildings shall satisfy the following requirements:

- The sleeping area and any accessory areas of the shelter will be considered a residential Group R-1 occupancy.
- All portions of the shelter shall comply with the Seattle Building Code provisions for new buildings.

DRAFT