

# Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

## Nightclub Fire Safety Requirements

Updated October 2014

### Fire Sprinklers Requirements for New and Existing Nightclubs, Restaurants and Bars

Washington State and Seattle Building and Fire Codes require that an automatic sprinkler system be provided throughout all newly constructed and existing group A-2 “nightclubs”. A “nightclub” is defined as an A-2 Occupancy use in which the aggregate area of concentrated use of unfixed chairs and standing space that is specifically designated and primarily used for dancing or viewing performers exceeds 350 square feet, excluding adjacent lobby areas.

Any construction, use, or conversion of a building or structure to a “nightclub” as defined by the Seattle Fire Code must be in accordance with the provisions of the Seattle Fire Code.

“Nightclub” does not include theaters with fixed seating, banquet halls, or lodge halls. Newly constructed banquet halls, restaurants or bars not meeting the definition of “nightclub” but classified as A-2 Occupancy must install fire sprinklers where any one of the following applies:

- The fire area exceeds 5,000 square feet, or
- The occupant load equals 100 or more, or
- The fire area is located on a floor other than the level of exit discharge (does not apply to fire areas that include space located one floor above the level of exit discharge if the occupant load of the upper floor is less than 50).

### Seattle Fire Department Review and Enforcement of Sprinkler Requirements

The Seattle Fire Department conducts inspections to

determine if existing businesses meet the revised definition of a nightclub and are subject to the requirement for installation of a fire sprinkler system.

Businesses currently operating in a manner that meets the definition of nightclub would not be subject to the sprinkler requirement if they alter their business operation in a manner so that they no longer meet the criteria listed in the nightclub definition.

### Other Requirements - Emergency Plan Requirements

Nightclubs with an occupant load of 100 or more are required to develop a fire safety and evacuation plan, which is also referred to as an emergency plan. Each fire safety and evacuation plan should be specifically developed in consideration of the special characteristics of the building, the people who work there and the patrons who frequent the business.

The general requirements for emergency plans are summarized in Seattle Fire Department Client Assistance Memorandum No. 5051 “Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans”. In addition to these general requirements, nightclubs are also required to provide a detailed seating plan, occupant load, and occupant load limit as part of their emergency plan.

**LEGAL DISCLAIMER:** *This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. Individuals are responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this CAM.*

[www.seattle.gov/fire](http://www.seattle.gov/fire)



City of Seattle  
Fire Department

Fire Prevention Division  
220 3rd Avenue South  
(206) 386-1450