



Riverside County Fire Department

Office of the Fire Marshal

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Guideline

Title: Residentially Based Care Facilities – Group R-4 Occupancies		
Guideline: # G08-002	Effective Date: 12/02/2008	Revised Date: 05/19/2017
Code References: 2016 California Building Code, Chapter 4, Section 435		

Purpose:

This information bulletin has been developed to assist development applicants, architects, and contractors in determining the minimum requirements for licensed care facilities housing seven or more clients in residentially-based care facilities.

Scope:

This information bulletin is intended to ensure compliance with the appropriate requirements for Group R-4 residentially-based care facilities. The regulations regarding institutionally-based care facilities are found in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 19, as well as the 2016 California Building Code (CBC) and 2016 California Fire Code (CFC). Plans not conforming to the requirements listed herein will be returned as incomplete.

Contact Information:

For additional information regarding R-4 residential care facilities please contact your local Fire Marshal office.

Occupancy Classification:

R-4 Occupancies shall include buildings arranged as residential care/assisted living facilities including more than six ambulatory clients, but not more than 16 persons, excluding staff who reside on a 24 hour basis in a supervised residential environment and receive custodial care. The persons receiving care are capable of self-preservation. This occupancy classification may include a maximum six non-ambulatory or bedridden clients. R-4 occupancies shall include the following:

Assisted living facilities such as:

- Residential care facilities,
- Residential care facilities for the elderly (RCFE),
- Adult Residential Facilities,
- Congregate Living Health Facilities,
- Group Homes

Social rehabilitation facilities such as:

- Halfway houses,
- Community correctional center,
- Community correction reentry centers,
- Community treatment programs,
- Work furlough programs,
- Alcoholism or drug abuse recovery or treatment facilities

Submittal Requirements:

Prior to requesting a fire safety inspection, dimensional or scaled site and floor plans shall be submitted to the local Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) Office of the Fire Marshal for review and approval. Please submit these drawings at least two weeks prior to requesting an inspection. The plans must include the building address, occupancy classification, and the location of engineered sprinkler systems, smoke detectors/alarms, exit doors, landings, ramps, stairways, steps, sidewalks, and gates.

All dimensions must be included. A floor plan showing furniture layout shall be provided for each client bedroom. Aisle widths shall be indicated in the plan even though furniture does not need to be drawn to scale.

Provide a detailed letter clearly identifying all intended use and operations of the facility. Include room locations for staff, ambulatory, non-ambulatory and bedridden clients.

Furniture shall be in place for the RCFD inspection.

Please be aware that clearance from the RCFD ***does not*** constitute zoning clearance. Contact the Community Development or Planning Department of your local jurisdiction for zoning information.

Use this guideline to ensure that your plans have at least the minimum amount of information required to begin a review. It may be necessary to provide additional information beyond what is requested in this guideline depending on the project.

Codes and Standards:

1) Addressing:

- a) Address numbers shall be posted on the building and shall be visible from the street. Said numbers shall contrast with their background. *[Addressing shall be in accordance with Riverside County Fire Department Standard 07-01.]* CFC 505.1

2) Sprinklers:

- a) An automatic sprinkler system shall be installed where required in CBC Section 903. CBC 435.7.1
- b) An automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with CBC Section 903.3 shall be provided throughout all buildings with a Group R fire area. CBC 903.2.8, 903.3.1.1, and 903.3.1.2.

An automatic sprinkler system designed in accordance with CBC Section 903.3.1.3 shall not be utilized in Group R-2.1 occupancies.

- c) An approved sign to identify the **FIRE RISER ROOM** shall be placed on the exterior of the door constructed of durable materials, permanently installed and readily visible. CFC 509.1.

3) Fire Alarms:

- a) An approved fire alarm system shall be installed where required in CBC Section 907.2.10 [through 907.2.10.2]. CBC 435.7.2
- b) An approved manual and automatic fire alarm system shall be installed in Group R-4 occupancies. CBC 907.2.10.1

Exceptions:

- i) Housing persons none of whom are physically or mentally handicapped or non-ambulatory and which provide supervisory services such as alcoholism or drug abuse recovery or treatment facilities, halfway houses operated by the California Department of Corrections, and similar facilities and are provided with a manual fire alarm box which will actuate a distinctive fire alarm signal that can be heard throughout the facility.

- ii) An approved sign to identify the **FIRE ALARM CONTROL PANEL/ FACP** shall be placed on the exterior on the door, constructed of durable materials, permanently installed and readily visible. CFC 509.1

4) **Visual Notification Appliances:**

- a) In Group R-4 Protective Social Care Facilities which house persons who are hearing impaired, shall be provided with notification appliances for the hearing impaired installed in accordance with NFPA 72 and which shall activate upon initiation of the fire alarm system or the smoke alarms. CBC 907.5.2.3.4.

Definition of Protective Social Care: *The housing and care of any person of any age when such person is referred to or placed within such home or facility for care and supervision services by any governmental agency.*

5) **Smoke Alarms:**

- a) Locations: CBC 907.2.11.2
 - i) On ceilings or walls outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms.
 - ii) In each room used for sleeping purposes.
 - iii) In each story within a dwelling unit, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics. In dwellings or dwelling units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level.
 - iv) In enclosed common stairwells of apartment complexes and other multiple-dwelling complexes.
- b) Interconnected: CBC 907.2.11.5
 - i) Smoke alarms shall be electrically interconnected so as to cause all smoke alarms to sound a distinctive alarm signal upon actuation of any single smoke alarm.
- c) Power Source: CBC 907.2.11.6
 - i) In all facilities smoke alarms shall receive their primary power from the building wiring when such wiring is served from a commercial source and shall be equipped with battery backup.

6) **Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

- a) CBC Section 915 requires Group R occupancies located in a building containing a fuel-burning appliance or a building that has an attached garage shall be equipped with single station carbon monoxide alarms. The carbon monoxide alarms shall be listed as complying with UL 2034 and shall be installed and maintained in accordance with NFPA 720 and the manufacturer's instructions.

Exceptions:

1. Carbon monoxide detection shall not be required in dwelling units, sleeping units and classrooms where there are no communicating openings between the fuel-burning appliance or fuel-burning fireplace and the dwelling unit, sleeping unit or classroom.
2. Carbon monoxide detection shall not be required in dwelling units, sleeping units and classrooms where carbon monoxide detection is provided in one of the following locations:
 - 2.1. In an approved location between the fuelburning appliance or fuel-burning fireplace and the dwelling unit, sleeping unit or classroom.
 - 2.2. On the ceiling of the room containing the fuel-burning appliance or fuel-burning fireplace.

7) Maintenance Records:

- a) The maintenance and testing schedules and procedures for fire alarm and fire detection systems shall be in accordance with this section (CFC Chapter 9) and Chapter 10 of NFPA 72, 2016 edition. CFC 901.6 and 907.8.5
- b) Smoke detector sensitivity shall be checked within one year after installation and every alternate year thereafter. After the second calibration test, where sensitivity tests indicate that the detector has remained within its listed and marked sensitivity range (or 4-percent obscuration light grey smoke, if not marked), the length of time between calibration tests shall be permitted to be extended to a maximum of five years. Where the frequency is extended, records of detector-caused nuisance alarms and subsequent trends of these alarms shall be maintained. In zones or areas where nuisance alarms show any increase over the previous year, calibration test shall be performed. CFC 907.8.3.
- c) The inspection, testing, and maintenance of systems, their initiating devices, and notification appliances shall comply with Chapter 14 of NFPA 72.
- d) Maintenance schedule for water-based fire protection systems see NFPA 25, 2013, California Edition.
- e) Hood extinguishing system: Automatic fire-extinguishing systems shall be serviced at least every 6 months and after activation of the system. Inspection shall be by qualified individuals, and a certificate of inspection shall be forwarded to the fire code official upon completion. CFC 904.12.6.2
- f) Portable fire extinguishers shall be selected, installed and maintained in accordance with this section and Division 1, Chapter 3, Title 19 California Code or Regulations. CFC 906.

8) Fire Extinguisher:

- a) Portable fire extinguishers shall be installed in the following locations. CFC 906.1
 - i) In new and existing R-4 occupancies.
 - ii) Within 30 feet of commercial cooking equipment.
- b) A minimum rated extinguisher of 2A10BC shall be used. CCR, Title 19, Division 1, Section 568, Table 2 and Section 569, Table 3
- c) The maximum travel distance to an extinguisher shall be 75 feet. Title 19, Table 2.
- d) Portable fire extinguishers having a gross weight not exceeding 40 pounds shall be installed so that its top is not more than 5 feet above the floor. CFC 906.9 and CCR, Title 19, 567.6
- e) Portable fire extinguishers shall be serviced annually. CCR, Title 19, 575.1 and 596

9) Exit Doors:

- a) Egress doors shall be readily operable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort. CBC 1010.1.9
- b) Exits shall be three feet wide by six feet eight inches high and provide a 32-inch clear opening. CBC 1010.1.1

10) Exiting:

- a) *In addition to the general means of egress requirements of Chapter 10* there shall be a minimum of two exits. CBC 435.8.2.1

11) Intervening Rooms:

- a) A means of exit shall not pass through more than one intervening room. A means of egress shall not pass through kitchens, storerooms, closets, garages or spaces used for similar purposes. CBC 435.8.3.4

12) Corridors :

- a) Group R-4 occupancies shall have 44 inches on floors housing clients. CBC 435.8.4.2

Exceptions:

- i) Corridors serving an occupant load of 10 or less shall not be less than 36-inches in width.
 - ii) Corridors serving ambulatory persons only and having an occupancy load of 49 or less shall not be less than 36-inches in width.
- b) Door assemblies in corridors and smoke barriers. Fire door assemblies required to have a minimum fire protection rating of 20 minutes where located in corridor walls or smoke-barriers walls having a fire-resistance rating in accordance with CBC Table 716.6 shall be tested in accordance with NFPA 252 or UL 10C without the hose stream test. CBC 716.5.3.

Exception:

- i) Viewports that require a hole not larger than 1 inch (25mm) in diameter through the door, have least a 0.25-inch-thick (6.4mm) glass disc and the holder is of metal that will not melt out where subject to temperatures of 1,700° F (927° C).
- c) Door Closing: Fire door shall be self- or automatic closing in accordance with this section. CBC 716.5.9

Exception:

- i) The elevator car doors and the associated hoist way enclosures doors at the floor level designated for recall in accordance with CBC Section 3003.2 shall be permitted to remain open during Phase I emergency recall operations.

13) Exit Signs:

- a) Where required exit and exit access doors shall be marked by an approved exit sign readily visible from any direction of egress travel. CBC 1013.1
- b) Exit Signs shall be internally or externally illuminated. CBC 1013.3

14) Means of Egress Illumination:

- a) The means of egress, including the exit discharge, shall be illuminated at all times if the building space served by means of egress is occupied. CBC 1008.1

Exception:

- i) Sleeping units of Group R-4 occupancies.

15) Exit Enclosures:

- a) Group R-4 occupancies housing more than six non-ambulatory clients above the first floor shall be provided with two vertical exit enclosures. Stairway enclosures shall be in compliance with Section 1022. Exceptions to Section 1023 shall not apply in facilities licensed as a 24 hour care facility. CBC 435.8.6.1

16) Smoke Barriers:

- a) Group R-4 occupancies licensed as a Residential Care Facility with individual floor areas over 6000 square feet shall be provided with smoke barriers, constructed in accordance with CBC 707. CBC 435.5.1

17) Garage Separation:

- a) Door openings between a private garage and the dwelling unit shall be equipped with either solid wood doors or solid honeycomb core steel doors not less than 13/8 inches in thickness with a fire protection rating of not less than 20 minutes. Doors shall be self-closing and self-latching. CBC 406.3.4

18) Fences and Gates:

- a) Grounds of residential care for the elderly serving Alzheimer's clients may be fenced and gated therein equipped with locks, provided safe dispersal areas are located not less than 50-feet from the buildings. Dispersal areas shall be sized to provide an area of not less than 3-square feet per occupant. Gates shall not be installed across corridors or passageways leading to such dispersal areas unless they comply with egress requirements. CBC 435.8.8
- b) Gates serving the means of egress system shall comply with the requirements of this section. Gates used as a component in a means of egress shall conform to the applicable requirements for doors. CBC 1010.2

19) Change in Elevation and Ramps:

- a) Where changes in elevations of less than 12-inches exist in the means of egress, sloped surfaces shall be used. Where the slope is greater than one unit vertical in 20-units horizontal, ramps complying with CBC Section 1012 shall be used. Where the difference in elevation is 6-inches or less, the ramp shall be equipped with either handrails or floor finish materials that contrast with adjacent floor finish materials. CBC 1003.5
- b) Ramps used as part of means of egress shall have a running slope not steeper than 1-unit vertical in 12-units horizontal. The slope of other pedestrian ramps shall not be steeper than 1-unit vertical unit in 8-units horizontal. CBC 1012.3
- c) The minimum width of a means of egress ramp shall not be less than required for corridors by CBC Section 1020.2. The clear width of a ramp and the clear width between handrails, if provided, shall be 36-inches minimum. CBC 1012.6.1
- d) The surface of ramps shall be of slip-resistant materials that are securely attached. CBC 1012.8.1
- e) Handrail height, measured above stair tread nosings, or finish surface of ramp slope shall be uniform, not less than 34-inches and not more than 38-inches. CBC 1014.2
- f) Guardrails shall be provided if ramps are more than 30-inches above grade. CBC 1015.2
- g) Guards shall form a protective barrier not less than 42-inches high, measured vertically above the leading edge of the tread, adjacent walking surface or adjacent seat board. CBC 1015.3

20) Electrical:

- a) Identified electrical hazards shall be abated. Identified hazardous electrical conditions in permanent wiring shall be brought to the attention of the code official responsible for enforcement of the California Electrical Code. Electrical wiring, devices, appliances and other equipment that is modified or damaged and constitutes an electrical shock or fire hazard shall not be used. CFC 605.1
- b) Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for permanent wiring. Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, under doors or floor coverings, nor shall such cords be subject to environmental damage or physical impact. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances. CFC 605.5
- c) Multiplug adapters, such as cube adapters, unfused plug strips or any other device not complying with the California Electrical Code shall be prohibited. CFC 605.4
- d) Relocatable power taps shall be directly connected to a permanently installed receptacle. CFC 605.4.2
- e) Doors into electrical control panel rooms shall be marked with a plainly visible and legible sign stating **ELECTRICAL ROOM** or similar approved wording. The disconnecting means for each service, feeder or branch circuit originating on a switchboard or panel board shall be legibly and durably marked to indicate its purpose unless such purpose is clearly evident. CFC 605.3.1
- f) A working space of not less than 30-inches in width, 36-inches in depth and 78-inches in height shall be provided in front of electrical service equipment. Where the electrical service equipment is wider than 30-inches, the working space shall not be less than the width of the equipment. No storage of any materials shall be located within the designated working space. CFC 605.3

Exceptions:

- i) Where other dimensions are required or allowed by the California Electrical Code.
- ii) Access openings into attics or under-floor areas which provide a minimum clear opening of 22-inches by 30-inches.

21) Open Flame:

- a) A person shall not utilize or allow to be utilized, an open flame in R-4 occupancies. CFC 308.5, Title 19 3.25

22) Ignition Sources:

- a) Clearance between ignition sources, such as luminaries, heaters, flame-producing devices and combustible materials shall be maintained in an approved manner. CFC 305.1

23) Securing Compressed Gas Containers, Cylinders and Tanks:

- a) Compressed gas containers, cylinders and tanks shall be secured to prevent falling caused by contact, vibration or seismic activity. CFC 5303.5.3.