



# Fire Department

## HEADQUARTERS

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## CODE SUMMARY

### GROUP M OCCUPANCIES – MERCANTILE BUILDINGS

A code summary is a compilation of code sections related to a specific occupancy or permit. This code summary lists sections of code pertaining to Mercantile Buildings as defined by the **California Fire Code**. Under each heading you will find the correlating code language and the reference cited. These requirements pertain to existing buildings. New construction may be subject to additional requirements. Please feel free to direct any questions to the Fire Prevention Division at (805) 681-5500.

### SCOPE

#### **Group M Occupancies defined:**

Buildings or portions thereof used for the display and sale of merchandise, and involving stocks of goods, wares or merchandise incidental to such purposes and accessible to the public. Mercantile occupancies shall include: department stores, drug stores, markets, **MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICE STATIONS**, wholesale or retail stores, and sales rooms.

#### **1. Extinguishers Required:**

- A. One Class 2-A rated fire extinguisher shall be provided for each 6,000 sq. ft. of light hazard fuel load or 3000 sq. ft. of ordinary hazard fuel load. Travel distance shall not exceed 75 feet. (CFC 906.3)
- B. If Class B fuel hazards are present, a Class B rated fire extinguisher shall be provided in accordance with Table 906.3(2) of the CFC. (CFC 906.3)

TYPE OF HAZARD	BASIC MINIMUM EXTINGUISHER RATING	MAXIMUM TRAVEL DISTANCE TO EXTINGUISHERS	
		(in feet)	(in meters)
<i>Light (low)</i>	<i>5B 10B</i>	<i>30 50</i>	<i>9.15 15.25</i>
<i>Ordinary (moderate)</i>	<i>10B 20B</i>	<i>30 50</i>	<i>9.15 15.25</i>
<i>Extra (high)</i>	<i>40B 80B</i>	<i>30 50</i>	<i>9.15 15.25</i>

- C. Fire extinguisher shall not be obstructed or obscured from view. (CFC 906.6)
- D. Fire extinguishers not housed in cabinets, shall be installed on the hangers or brackets supplied. Hangers or brackets shall be securely anchored to the mounting surface in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions. (CFC 906.7)
- E. Additional extinguishers shall be provided at fuel dispensing facilities (service stations) so an extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2-A:20-B:C is provided and located not more than 75 feet from pumps, dispensers or storage tank fill-pipe openings. (CFC 2305.5)
- F. Extinguishers shall be inspected monthly by the building owner or occupant, or electronically monitored. (T19 Sec. 574.1)
- G. Extinguishers shall be subject to maintenance annually by licensed technician. (T19 Sec. 575.1)

## 2. Means of Egress:

- A. Means of egress shall be continuously maintained free from obstructions. (CFC 1003.6)
- B. Means of egress (except aisles) shall be illuminated when the building space is occupied. Illumination for means of egress shall be connected to an emergency power system that provides illumination for not less than 90 minutes in case of primary power loss. (CFC 1006.3)
- C. Means of egress doors shall travel in direction of egress travel when occupant load is greater than 49. (CFC 1008.1.2)
- D. Manually operated flush bolts or surface bolts are not permitted. (CFC 1008.1.9.4)
- E. Egress doors shall be readily operable from the egress side without use of a key or special knowledge or effort. Exception: The main exterior door or doors are permitted to be equipped with key operated locking device from the egress side if the locking device is readily distinguishable as being locked and a sign is posted stating "THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED WHEN BUILDING IS OCCUPIED". Sign to be of durable construction and in letters at least one-inch high on contrasting background. (CFC 1008.1.9.3)
- F. The unlatching of any door shall not require more than one operation. (CFC 1008.9.5)
- G. Exit and exit access doors shall be marked by approved exit signs readily visible from any direction of egress travel. (CFC 1011.1)
- H. Exit signs shall be internally or externally illuminated at all times; signs shall be connected to an emergency power system that provides illumination for not less than 60 minutes in case of primary power loss. (CFC 1011.6.3)
- I. Means of egress shall not pass through kitchens, storage rooms, closets or spaces used for similar purposes, or through rooms subject to locking. (CFC 1014.2)
- J. The common path of egress travel shall not exceed 75 feet. (CFC 1014.3)
- K. Three exits shall be provided from any story, basement, or individual space when the occupant load of that area is between 501 and 1000 persons. (CFC 1015.1.1)
- L. Four exits shall be provided from any story, basement, or individual space when the occupant load of that area is exceeds 1000 persons. (CFC 1015.1.1)
- M. Minimum clear aisle width shall not be less than 36 inches. (CFC 1017.4)
- N. Required corridors shall not be less than 44 inches in width for an occupancy capacity of 50 or more and 36 inches for an occupancy of less than 50. (CFC 1018.2)
- O. Two exits shall be provided from buildings when the building has more than one story above grade, when the number of occupants per floor exceeds 49, or when the travel distance in the building exceeds 75 ft. (CFC 1021.1)

## 3. Housekeeping:

- A. Storage of combustible materials shall be orderly, with storage separated from heating devices by a distance or shielded so that ignition cannot occur. (CFC 315.3)
- B. Combustible waste containers larger than 40 gallons shall be constructed of noncombustible material or approved combustible material and provided with a lid. (CFC 304.3)
- C. Combustible waste containers larger than 1.5 cubic yards shall not be stored in buildings or placed within 5 feet of combustible walls, openings or combustible roof eave lines. (CFC 304.3.3)
- D. Materials subject to spontaneous ignition, such as oily rags, shall be stored in a listed disposal container. (CFC 304.3)
- E. Combustible materials shall not be stored in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms or electrical equipment rooms. (CFC 315.3.3)
- F. Storage shall be maintained 2 feet or more below the ceiling in nonsprinklered areas or a minimum of 18 inches below sprinkler deflectors in sprinklered areas of buildings. (CFC 315.3.1)

## 4. Electrical

- A. 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. Storage is prohibited within the designated working space. (CFC 605.3)
- B. Multiplug adaptors, such as cube adaptors, unfused plug strips or other such devices not complying with the California Electrical Code shall be prohibited. (CFC 605.4)

- C. Relocatable power taps shall be permitted if they are of the grounded type, listed by an approved testing laboratory, and directly connected to a permanently installed receptacle. (CFC 605.4.1)
- D. Extension cords and power taps shall not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors or floor covering nor subject to physical damage. (CFC 605.4.3)
- E. Extension cords shall not be used in place of permanent wiring. (CFC 605.5)
- F. Appliance cords and extension cords shall be maintained in good condition without splices, deterioration or damage. (CFC 605.5.3)
- G. Open junction boxes and open wiring splices shall be prohibited. Approved covers shall be provided for all switch and electrical outlet boxes. (CFC 605.6)
- H. Temporary wiring is allowed for a period not to exceed 90 days; such wiring is allowed for longer periods for construction, remodeling, or repair work. (CFC 605.9)

## 5. Flammable Liquids:

- A. A clearly identified and readily accessible emergency disconnect switch shall be provided at motor fuel-dispensing facilities to stop the transfer of fuel to the dispensers in the event of a fuel spill or other emergency. The switch shall be located within 100 feet but not less than 20 feet from the dispensers. (CFC 2306.7.4)
- B. Quantities of flammable and combustible liquids in excess of 10 gallons used for maintenance purposes and operation of equipment shall be stored in liquid storage cabinets. (CFC 5704.3.4.4)
- C. An operational permit is required for the storage, handling or use of more than 5 gallons of flammable liquid indoors or 10 gallons of flammable liquid outdoors. (CFC 105.6.16)
- D. An operational permit is required for the storage, handling or use of more than 25 gallons of combustible liquid indoors or 60 gallons of combustible liquid outdoors. (CFC 105.6.16)
- E. Storage of flammable liquids shall not exceed 30 gallons of Class 1A flammable liquid or 120 gallons of Class 1B and 1C flammable liquids per control area. Storage of Combustible liquids shall not exceed 120 gallons of Class 2 combustible liquid or 330 gallons of Class 3A combustible liquid. (CFC 5704.3.4.2)

### Exceptions:

1. Maximum allowable quantities shall be increased 100 percent in buildings equipped throughout with an approved automatic sprinkler system.
2. Maximum allowable quantities shall be increased 100 percent when stored in approved storage cabinets, day boxes, gas cabinets, exhausted enclosures or listed safety cans.
3. Where exception #1 and #2 both apply, increase for both exceptions shall be applied accumulatively.

## 6. Miscellaneous:

- A. An approved fire apparatus access road not less than 20 wide shall be provided for access to within 150 feet of all portions of the building. (CFC 503.1.1)
- B. Fire access roads shall be marked with approved signs or markings that state "NO PARKING FIRE LANE". Marking shall be maintained in clean, legible condition and repaired when necessary. (CFC 503.3)
- C. Fire access roads shall not be obstructed in any manner, including the parking of vehicles. (CFC 503.4)
- D. Exterior doors and their function cannot be eliminated without approval. If approved, and door retains the appearance as a functional, door shall be posted on the exterior "THIS DOOR BLOCKED". (CFC 504.2)
- E. All buildings shall have approved address numbers or building numbers placed in a position to be plainly legible from the street or road fronting the property. (CFC 505.1)
- F. A manual fire alarm system shall be installed in Group M occupancies having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge. (CFC 907.2.7)
- G. Fire Alarm systems shall be tested and maintained in working condition in accordance with Chapter 14 of NFPA 72. (CFC 901.6)
- H. Fire sprinkler and standpipe systems shall be inspected, tested, and maintained in accordance with Chapter 5 of Title 19. (T19 Sec. 904)

**NOTE:** Blue indicates those requirements that pertain to new construction. No reference to these requirements in the existing construction section (Chapter 11)