

Building Occupancy Permits

DEFINITIONS:

“Building Occupancy Permit” means permission or authorization issued in writing pursuant to The Winnipeg Building By-Law No. 4555/87 to occupy any building or part thereof in the City.

“Occupancy” means the use or intended use of a building or part thereof for the shelter or support of persons, animals or property.

Generally, the installation of affixed furniture such as cupboards and shelving is considered a part of the construction process. However, moving of loose furniture, stock or goods, inventory, accessory equipment, personal belongings or occupants on the premises is considered occupancy.

OBJECTIVE:

The Building Occupancy Permit is one mechanism used by the City of Winnipeg to assist in establishing and maintaining control over building standards. It helps ensure that work, for which a Building Permit has been issued, has been done in accordance with the terms of the permit and is consistent with the applicable regulations. As a public document, the Occupancy Permit also indicates to the general public the terms and nature of the occupancy permission.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. Who needs a new Occupancy Permit?

- a. Every new occupant/tenant
- b. Every existing occupant/tenant who has to vacate the entire building, floor, wing, or unit to accommodate alterations, or where in the opinion of the Authority Having Jurisdiction, the alterations are significant enough to warrant one
- c. Every existing occupant/tenant who is relocating or expanding their unit within a building
- d. Every existing occupant/tenant who wishes to increase the occupant load of the occupied space
- e. The building owner when constructing a new building or addition

2. Who can apply for an occupancy permit?

An application for a Building Occupancy permit can be made by the building owner, or authorized agent. This can be the property manager, the intended occupant/tenant, the general contractor, or a designer (Architect, Engineer, Interior Designer).

3. How do I obtain an Occupancy Permit?

Obtaining an occupancy permit is a process that can be broken down in two main parts. The first is plan submission and approval, and the second is inspections. In the first part the applicant puts together an application package and submits it to a Permit Technician in the Zoning and Permits Branch located in Unit 31, 30 Fort Street. (For submission requirements, contact the branch at 204-986-5140.) The submission is screened for completeness and distributed to various parties for review. Once the reviewers have been satisfied that the proposal complies with all applicable regulations, a building permit can be paid for and picked up. This enables the applicant to commence the needed construction work. Upon substantial completion, the applicant submits a request form to the Occupancy Permit Clerk to trigger occupancy related inspections. In cases where the proposed use has been previously established and no additional work requiring a permit is proposed/required, occupancy inspections can be requested right after payment for the permit has been processed. Once all required disciplines have completed their inspections, a written decision is sent to the applicant. Occupancy is either approved on interim basis or as a final approval. If there are deficiencies of more serious nature, a denial letter is sent out instead.

4. What if I occupy a space without a valid occupancy permit?

The Winnipeg Building By-Law states in part that “no owner, agent or person in charge shall occupy/use a building or part thereof, or permit any occupancy/use of a building or part thereof, or change the occupancy, without first obtaining a Building Occupancy Permit”. Doing so is committing an offence under the same By-Law, which can result in prosecution. Enforcement action is typically taken jointly against the property owner and the occupant. When it is evident that other involved persons including the applicant (where an application for an occupancy permit has been submitted, but the permit has not been issued), directors and officers have personal knowledge of the offence, enforcement action including charges may extend to them as well.

5. Who do I contact if I have additional questions related to Occupancy?

The Occupancy Permit Clerk can be reached by phone at 204-986-5136 or by e-mail at occupancy@winnipeg.ca.

GUIDELINES FOR ISSUANCE:

1. The final building occupancy permit:

The Final Building Occupancy Permit shall be issued for any building, provided that the construction work for which the permit had been taken out, including all mechanical and electrical installations

associated with said construction work have, to the best of the City of Winnipeg's knowledge, been completed in all respects in accordance with the requirements of the Building By-law.

An occupancy permit may be issued for a 'base' building even in cases where all spaces to be occupied have yet to be developed. This occupancy permit signifies that core building life safety systems have been established, which may be a pre-requisite for the development of interior spaces. However, these units must not be occupied prior to the issuance of individual occupancy permits.

2. The interim building occupancy permit:

An Interim Building Occupancy Permit may be issued at the City's discretion for the use of a part of a building (floor, wing or defined area) or for the entire building pending its completion. An Interim Building Occupancy Permit will typically list conditions and/or outstanding defects or work yet to be completed, and will set out a time limit for its validity.

Where an Interim Building Occupancy Permit is being sought for partial use of a building (floor, wing or defined area), it is important to note that certain construction and life safety systems must be complete for the entire structure (proposed occupied and non-occupied areas), where applicable, such as (but not limited to):

- a. Fire protection and/or structural members must comply with approved third party testing agency assemblies and flame spread ratings
- b. Fire compartmentalization between floors, fire walls and tenancies to be completed.
- c. Fire alarm system must be operative in all areas.
- d. Emergency lighting must be operable in all required exits including stairwells.
- e. Central monitoring of the fire alarm system and sprinkler systems (where required) shall be connected.
- f. Firefighting equipment to be complete and operable. This includes fire pumps, standpipe systems, sprinkler systems and fire extinguishers.

The following items where applicable, shall be completed in all areas to be occupied, as well as any other areas which are required to serve the occupied areas:

ELECTRICAL

1. Receptacles and switches must be installed.
2. Electrical distribution equipment shall have all covers installed and shall be maintained in a safe condition.

3. Emergency lighting facilities where required, must be operative on occupied floors of the building.
4. All stairway and exit lighting fixtures must be installed and operative on occupied floors.
5. All electrical equipment must be connected or else the conductors feeding this equipment must be disconnected both at the panel and the appliance end, the conductors being made safe at both ends.
6. Electrical Engineer's Letter of Certification (when required) shall reference the applicable electrical and building permit numbers.

MECHANICAL AND PLUMBING INSTALLATION

1. All fire dampers must be installed.
2. Garbage chutes and linen chutes shall have their sprinkler protection system and venting system complete. Or, if these are not complete, use of these chutes shall be prevented by barriers or locks.
3. Should the area to be occupied include a commercial kitchen, all restaurant cooking equipment exhaust systems shall be complete.
4. Exhaust systems serving areas containing hazardous substances, shall be operative when these areas are in use. (e.g. enclosed storage garages, combustible storage rooms, laboratories)
5. All plumbing facilities for the area to be occupied must be completed. Waste and water connections for incidental fixtures (drinking fountains, sinks, etc.) must be sealed with proper caps or plugs.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

All safety aspects of the Building By-law, including, but not restricted to the following, must be completed:

1. Elevator shafts, excavations and areas still under construction must be guarded to the satisfaction of the Building Inspection Unit and appropriate signs are to be posted to prevent access by tenants or persons not authorized to be on the construction site. In addition, where ongoing construction may affect occupied areas, measures shall be taken to reduce the risk to occupants in accordance with section 8.1 and 8.2 of the MBC.
2. Adequate egress must be provided and maintained unobstructed at all times.
3. Fire separation of hazardous areas to be completed.

4. Where required, certification under seal of a Professional Engineer entitled to practice in the Province of Manitoba and skilled in the type of work concerned, that the building is in compliance with the structural design drawings and with the Building By-law must be provided.
5. Where required, certification under seal of an Architect entitled to practice in the Province of Manitoba that the building is in compliance with the architectural design drawings and with the Building By-law must be provided.
6. Where required, all outstanding documentation such as steel joist drawings, piling certificates, shop drawings, design drawings, etc. under seal of a Professional Engineer entitled to practice in the Province of Manitoba and skilled in the type of work concerned must be provided.