



CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY PROCESS

What is a Certificate of Occupancy?

A Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) is a document that certifies a structure, such as a hotel, tenant space, etc., meets the minimum life safety requirements and is safe to occupy. A C of O is issued to all commercial businesses and must be obtained in order to apply for a City Business License.

When is a Certificate of Occupancy Required?

1. The business/structure currently doesn't have one.
2. All newly constructed commercial buildings. (For example, if a brand-new strip mall is built, the owner of the mall will receive a C of O for the entire building. However, each individual tenant must then obtain a separate C of O for their unit prior to operation – see #5 below).
3. Addition or major alteration to the business/structure, including any major electrical, mechanical, plumbing, or structural changes.
4. Change of use/occupancy classification of the business/structure. (For example, if an existing office space is being converted into a restaurant).
5. A new tenant is occupying the unit or a portion of the structure thereof. (For example, if there is a strip mall and a new tenant is moving into one of the units, the tenant must apply for a brand-new C of O prior to becoming operational).
6. Change of business/building ownership. (For example, if owner "A" sells the building to owner "B," then a new C of O application should be submitted, so we can reissue one to the new owner.

Application Requirements:

1. Submit an application with owner/tenant information, as well as a lease agreement (if applicable).
2. Submit a floor plan of the business/structure.
3. Once Planning has approved the use and zoning of the proposed business, you may email your inspection requests to the Building Dept. and Fire Dept. (Inspection@cityofdhs.org). Please include the contact information for someone we can meet on-site for the inspection.
4. You may apply for a business license once the Building Official issues a C of O.
5. The C of O and Business License must always be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises.

Applicable Code Sections from DHS Municipal Code:

15.60.120 Certificate of occupancy required.

No person shall occupy any building which has been moved into or within the City and which does not fully conform to the requirements of the building code until a certificate of occupancy has been issued by the Building Department. Any such building which has been so moved, and has not been altered, repaired, or changed within the time and according to the provisions of the contract required as a condition to the granting of the building moving permit, is a public nuisance and may be abated as such.

17.72.010 Purpose.

These provisions are intended to ensure that any initiation or re-establishment of a legally permitted use within a legally established (or a legal nonconforming) structure shall comply with all applicable provisions of the municipal code.

17.72.020 Application.

No vacant, relocated, altered, repaired, or hereafter erected structure shall be occupied, or no change in use of land or structure(s) shall be inaugurated, or no new business commenced until a certificate of occupancy has been issued by the Department. An application for the permit shall be on a form prescribed by the Director and shall be filed with the Department pursuant to Chapter 17.68 (Applications and Fees).

Steps to Obtain a C of O for an EXISTING BUSINESS

Step 1: Apply online for Certificate of Occupancy via our online permitting portal.

Step 2: Schedule an inspection for your structure/business. This inspection will be non-invasive and is conducted to ensure life safety measures are met and will help avoid possible future code violations. Below is a list of typical items that we inspect.

- Ingress and egress of structure and parking area to ensure proper access is provided.
- Interior/exterior walkthrough of life safety items (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, etc.)
- Swimming pool to be up to date with Environmental Health inspections, permits, and safety measures (If applicable).

Step 3: Once the structure has been inspected any outstanding items are addressed, the applicant will receive a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy.

Steps to Obtain a C of O for a NEW BUSINESS

Step 1: Apply online for Certificate of Occupancy via our online permitting portal.

Step 2: Schedule an inspection for your structure/business. This inspection will be non-invasive and is conducted to ensure life safety measures are met and will help avoid possible future code violations. Below is a list of typical items that we inspect.

- Ingress and egress of structure and parking area to ensure proper access is provided.
- Verify Parcels are merged (If applicable).
- Verify landscaping meets minimum requirements.
- Interior/exterior walkthrough of life safety items (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, etc.)
- Verify signage is permitted, inspected, and conforms to our Municipal Code.
- Swimming pool to be up to date with Environmental Health inspections, permits, and safety measures (If applicable).

Step 3: Once the structure has been inspected any outstanding items are addressed, the applicant will receive a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy.

Common Deficiencies Found During Inspections:

- Fire protection systems and equipment are not up to date on their certification requirements.
- Tenant improvements, modifications, or alterations to the building without permits.
- Fire extinguishers without an approved and current State Fire Marshal tag by a state licensee.
- Fire extinguisher obstructed, not properly mounted, or wrong type of extinguisher for business.
- Fire permits for special uses and/or hazards (certain business processes require an annual fire permit, such as flammable or combustible liquids, welding, high piled storage) required for the business operation.
- Blocked exits or exits that have unapproved locks or latches installed on doors.
- Exit signage and or emergency exit illumination not maintained.
- Improper use of extension cords or multi-plug adapters.
- Storage racks lacking aisle maintenance, width clearances, aisle spacing, unsafe storage heights and unsecured storage.
- Rack storage 6-feet from finished floor require a Building permit.
- Maintain storage 24-inches below ceilings without fire sprinklers, 18-inches below with fire sprinklers.
- Unpermitted construction.

Flow Chart for Business License/C of O Process:

