



**BUILDING CODE MANUAL  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
BUILDING AND SAFETY DIVISION  
Based on the 2011 LACBC**

**#43  
303.1  
Article 1  
07-12-11  
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**PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP INCLUDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL ROOMS AND OTHER ACCESSORY USES**

In the last edition of the Standard Building Code published by Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI – one of the three organizations that formed ICC), Assembly Occupancy was defined as the use of buildings, or portion thereof, for the gathering of persons for purposes, such as ...religious functions having an occupant load greater than 100 occupants. It also had an exception which read:

“Accessory religious educational rooms and religious auditoriums with occupant loads of less than 100 are not considered separate occupancies.”

The first edition of the IBC (2000 edition was published by ICC) where all assembly occupancies had an exception based on the threshold of 50 occupants in lieu of the 100 occupants as a rule, but as an oversight the 2000 IBC was published still carrying the exception for places of religious worship based on the 100 occupant threshold. Over the years as each IBC was published, the exception has been perpetuated as an oversight in different code sections.

The intent of the exception was to classify all accessory occupancy buildings, such as, religious educational rooms and other accessory religious auditoriums used as part of a place of religious worship to be the same Group A-3 occupancy regardless of its occupant load (less than or more than 100 occupants). The basis for occupant load of 100 has little significance in the IBC and it is best that this artificial threshold be eliminated, so that, Group A-3 shall be interpreted to read as follows:

**I. Places of religious worship**, including all accessory religious educational rooms, religious auditoriums shall be classified as Group A-3 Occupancy, unless exception 1, 2 or 3 of Section 303.1 applies. All religious educational rooms shall comply with Section 442.4.

Multipurpose rooms greater than 750 square feet with commercial kitchen shall be classified as Group A-2 occupancy.

**II. Religious, Private, or Charter Schools.** Educational facilities owned and run by religious or secular organizations shall be classified as Group E occupancy.

**Accessory rooms or accessory buildings.** Gymnasiums, cafeteria, library, and auditorium shall be classified based on use and occupancy as required by Section 508.

**III. Combinations of I and II above – Places of religious worship and Religious, Private, or Charter Schools.** If the facility is used in combination of Group A and E occupancies, then each building used in combination shall comply with both requirements of Group A and E occupancy whichever are more restrictive requirements, including, but not limited to:

- Chapter 4, Section 442
- Chapter 5, Building area and height limitation shall comply with Group A-3 occupancy.
- Chapter 9, Section 907
- Chapter 10, occupant load of a room shall be based on its use. If the room has multiple uses, then the occupant load shall be based on whichever use provides the most occupants.

Supersedes BCM 303 Article 1 dated 02-05-98

WRITTEN BY: STEVE IKKANDA  
Civil Engineer

REVIEWED BY: JUAN MADRIGAL  
Senior Civil Engineer

RECOMMENDED BY:

APPROVED BY:



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HASSAN ALAMEDDINE  
Chief Engineer



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RAJ PATEL  
Superintendent of Building