



Child Care Centers

General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) conducts fire inspections in all child care centers that are applying for new licenses and those that are already licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). DCYF is the state licensing authority for child care centers, per the [Washington Administrative Code 110-300](#). DCYF requires approval from the OSFM before licensing a facility and may suspend a current license if the OSFM identifies hazards. Child care centers are inspected to the International Fire Code, all applicable state amendments, and to the [Washington Administrative Code 212-12](#). The OSFM does not conduct inspections on home child care facilities.

This document provides the general requirements for compliance, but it does not include every requirement. Local building and fire codes still apply, which means the local permit and plan review processes shall be followed and approval from the local authorities obtained.

Where there is a conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement or most restrictive provision applies.

Occupancy Classification for Child Care Centers

Child care centers are generally classified as Group E occupancies, but the age of children being cared for may require the center to be classified as a Group I-4. Building construction requirements and fire protection features are more restrictive for Group I occupancies. The local building and/or fire official will determine the occupancy classification as defined below:

Group E occupancy – Any portion of a building/room or structure used for child care services for more than five children **older** than 2 ½ years of age.

Group I-4 occupancy – Any portion of a building/room or structure used for child care services for more than five children **younger** than 2 ½ years of age. Rooms located on the level of exit discharge and where each room has an exit door directly to the exterior of the building may be classified as a Group E for more than five but not more than 100 children.

Certificate of Occupancy

- Obtain a Certificate of Occupancy from the local building department. IBC 111.1

The following items must be listed on the Certificate of Occupancy:

- Occupancy Classification (E or I-4 as indicated above). IBC 111.2
- Address of the location being licensed. IBC 111.2
- If the building has multiple uses, the space being licensed shall be clearly identified. IBC 111.2

Building Features

- Address must be visible from the street. IFC 505.1
- The perimeter of the building is free of fire hazards. IFC 304.1



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Exit Signs

- Exit signs are installed. IFC 1013.1
- Exit signs are clearly visible from any direction of approach. IFC 1013.1
- Exit signs are illuminated. IFC 1013.3, 1013.5, 1013.6.2 & 3
- Exit signs have contrasting color/design to the background where they are installed. IFC 1013.6.1
- Exit signs shall be installed and maintained. IFC 1031.4

Egress Illumination

- Monthly documented 30 second test of back up battery in emergency light(s). IFC 1031.10.1
- Annual documented 90 minute test of back up battery in emergency light(s). IFC 1031.10.2

Means of Egress

Doors

- Combustible materials shall not be stored in exits. IFC 315.3.2
- A second exit is required from spaces that care for 10 or more children 2 ½ years of age or less. IFC 1006.2.2.4
- Means of egress doors shall be readily distinguishable. IFC 1010.1
- All egress doors must have a width of 32 inches or greater. IFC 1010.1.1
- Egress doors are of the pivoted or side-hinged swinging type. IFC 1010.1.2
- Doors of a facility where the occupant load is 50 or more must swing in the direction of egress travel. IFC 1010.1.2.1
- Doors readily open from egress side without use of a special key, special knowledge, or effort. IFC 1010.1.9
- Door hardware to include handles, pulls, latches, locks, and other operating devices do not require tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist to operate. IFC 1010.1.9.1
- Door hardware height shall be between 34 inches to 48 inches above finished floor. IFC 1010.1.9.2
- The unlatching of any door or leaf does not require more than one operation (single action hardware). IFC 1010.1.9.6
- Manually operated flush bolts or surface bolts are not permitted. IFC 1010.1.9.5
- In those classified as Group E, Panic hardware is installed on exit doors where the occupant load is 50 or more. IFC 1010.1.10
- Any gates used as a component in a means of egress shall follow the applicable requirements for doors. IFC 1010.2
- Exit doorways are clear of obstructions. IFC 1022.1



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Exit Travel

- Egress from a room or space does not pass through adjoining/intervening rooms or areas. IFC 1016.2
- Egress routes do not pass through any room that can be locked to prevent egress. IFC 1016.2
- Egress shall not pass through kitchens, storage rooms, closets, or spaces used for similar purposes. IFC 1016.2
- The required width of corridors shall be unobstructed. IFC 1020.3
- Corridors used as egress routes must have the following minimum unobstructed widths: IFC 1020.2
 - 36 inches in buildings with an occupant load of 50 or fewer
 - 44 inches in buildings with an occupant load greater than 50
 - 72 inches in Group E buildings with an occupant load of 100 or more
- Exit paths lead to a public way (e.g., sidewalk, parking lot). IFC 1028.5

Sprinkler System

- Occupant loads greater than 50 require sprinkler systems 903.2.3 & .6.1 (WAC 51-54A)
 - Except those with:
 - Direct exiting out of each classroom
 - Located at the level of exit discharge
 - Occupant load of 100 or less
- If installed, shall be monitored through the fire alarm system. IFC 903.4.1
- Annual inspection and testing is required. IFC 901.6
- Annual confidence test report shall be maintained. IFC 901.6.2
- Daycares on 2nd floor and above in type VB construction are sprinklered. IFC Table 903.2.3

Fire Alarm System

- Installed when occupant load is greater than 50. IFC 907.2.6.4
- If installed, monitoring is provided. IFC 907.6.6
- Annual inspection and testing is required. IFC 901.6, 907.8
- Annual confidence test report readily available for review by inspectors. IFC 901.6.2, IFC 907.8.1

Portable Fire Extinguisher

- Minimum size is (2)A:10B:C. IFC 906.3
- Travel distance from any point in facility to an extinguisher is not more than 75 feet. IFC 906.3(1) TABLE
- Travel distance to fire extinguishers for cooking areas is not to exceed 30 feet. IFC 906.1
- One fire extinguisher is installed for every 3,000 square feet. IFC 906.3(1) TABLE
- Extinguishers are located in a conspicuous location. IFC 906.5
- Extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured. IFC 906.6
- Extinguishers shall be installed in a cabinet or by a hanging bracket. IFC 906.7 & 8
- The tops of extinguishers shall not exceed 5 feet above the floor. IFC 906.9.1
- Monthly checks shall be completed/documentated by facility staff to ensure extinguishers are ready for use (needles should be in green on gauges, safety pins are in place, seals are not broken, and hoses are clear of debris). IFC 906.2 (NFPA 10)
- Annual inspection and testing required. IFC 901.6 and 906.2



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Fire Safety

- Monthly fire drills are conducted. WAC 212-12-044
- Monthly fire drills are documented. IFC 405.5 (WAC 51-54A)
- If the facility has an automatic fire alarm system, the system shall be activated as part of the drill. IFC 405.7 (WAC 51-54A)
- Fire escape routes shall be posted at exit discharge. IFC 404.4.
- Fire safety plan in place. IFC 404.2.2
- Fire evacuation plan in place. IFC 404.2.1
- Fire safety and evacuation plans are reviewed annually and documented. IFC 404.3

Occupant Load

- The licensed capacity is determined by the Department of Early Learning. WAC 110-300-0354
- The fire and life safety inspection for occupant load (not licensed capacity) shall be determined by taking the net floor area and dividing it by 35. IFC Table 1004.5
 - Net Floor Area is defined as – the actual occupied area (only the room areas that are used for specific occupancy purposes) not including unoccupied accessory areas such as corridors, stairways, toilet rooms, mechanical rooms, or closets. IFC TABLE 1004.5

General Housekeeping

- Non-sprinklered building maximum storage height is 24 inches below the ceiling. IFC 315.3.1
- Sprinklered building maximum storage height is 18 inches below sprinkler heads. IFC 315.3.1
- No storage in electrical, mechanical or boiler rooms. IFC 315.3.3
- Approved multi plug adapters are used. IFC 604.4
- Extension cords are not to be used in place of permanent wiring. IFC 604.5
- Penetrations to smoke/fire barriers shall be sealed with a rated material. IFC 703.1
- Curtains, draperies, fabric hangings, and other similar decorative materials suspended from walls or ceilings shall not exceed 10 percent of the wall or ceiling area to which they are attached. IFC 807.2
- Artwork and teaching materials in corridors shall not exceed 20 percent coverage of the corridor sidewall. IFC 807.5.2.2
- Artwork and teaching materials in classrooms shall not exceed 50 percent coverage of the classroom wall area to which they are attached. IFC 807.5.2.3
- Carbon monoxide detectors installed in occupancies. IFC 915.1.1