Yosemite Chapter International Code Council
P.O. Box 1525
Modesto, CA 95353-1525

CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Date: April 20, 2017

Attendance:

John Schweigerdt, City of Stockton
Geoff Simmons, City of Stockton
Denise Frazier, City of Merced
Oscar Diaz, City of Modesto

Items Discussed:

1. **OCCUPANT LOAD FACTOR FOR SMALL ASSEMBLY AREAS:** We discussed what would be the appropriate occupant load factor for small assembly spaces such as break rooms and reception lobbies.

1.1 **APPLICABLE CODES AND REGULATIONS:** 2016 California Building Code

- "**CBC Section 1004.1.2 Areas without fixed seating.** …For areas without fixed seating, the occupant load shall not be less than that number determined by dividing the floor area under consideration by the occupant load factor assigned to the function of the space as set forth in Table 1004.1.2."
- **CBC Table 1004.1.2**

1.2 **DISCUSSION:** When to apply an occupant load factor to space and which one to use can sometimes be up for interpretation. A common example of this would be break rooms which serve a main occupancy. Architects will sometime argue that the break room is "accessory" to the main occupancy and thus should not be required to have an occupant load or that the occupant load should use the same factor as the main occupancy. An example would be an office building where the occupant load was figured taking the total square footage of all offices, break rooms, lobbies, etc. and dividing it by 100 per table 1004.1.2. It is important to remember that determining an occupant load is not the same as establishing an *occupancy* per CBC Chapter 3. Section 1004.1.2 requires that the occupant load be figured based on the function of the **space** not the overall *occupancy*. Also, the code does not currently allow for considering a space as accessory from an occupant load perspective nor does it provide for any mitigating factors such as square footage of the space under consideration. Because establishing an occupant load directly correlates with the means of egress design it is important that these spaces be assigned an occupant load so that the egress from the space itself is adequate. A large employee breakroom than can fit fifty people should have two exits. In some cases, the break room occupant load factor may trigger a second exit for the main space which can be a point of contention but when reviewing fire/life safety it's always better to err on the conservative side.