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April 6, 2020

To: All Authorities Having Jurisdiction

From: SFM Scott F. Pilgreen

Re: Occupant Load

All,

Since the issuance last week of a revised State Health Order due to the COVID-19 Pandemic which went into effect Saturday, April 4th @ 5pm my office has received a number of calls relating to occupant load for "essential retailers" specifically grocery store related occupancies.

I have been asked to provide guidance as to how an occupant load is to be determined in an effort to reduce confusion on this matter by creating a procedure that can be used in all jurisdictions during this unprecedented time.

The information contained in this memorandum is intended to address this request;

The International Building Code (IBC), 2015 Edition is adopted by the State of Alabama. Chapter 10 of the IBC, specifically Section 1004 addresses Occupant Load this includes Table 1004.1.2 - Maximum Floor Area Allowances per Occupant.

Generally an occupancy such as a grocery type store is considered as "Mercantile". According to the table referenced the occupant load factor is 60 sq ft per occupant in the retail space while the factor is 300 sq ft per occupant in storage, stock and shipping areas.

In order to expedite the process one must determine the total square footage of the retail space and divide by the occupant load factor this will provide the occupant load. Once the occupant load is determined then divide in half to meet the requirements of the State Health order.

To summarize the information above is meant to provide guidance and clarification to Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ's) on how to determine occupant loads in retail spaces only. Understanding that local jurisdictions can be more restrictive this informational memorandum is not intended to interfere with or supersede that authority.

Should anyone have questions or need clarification do not hesitate to call or email me @ 334.850.5034 or email: scott.pilgreen@insurance.alabama.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Scott F. Pilgreen", written over a horizontal line.

Scott F. Pilgreen
State Fire Marshal