



April 1, 2020

## **Guidelines for Alternate Care Sites**

As we continue navigating uncharted waters with our battle against COVID-19, contingency plans are being placed into motion to designate Alternate Care Sites in the event that our hospital systems become overwhelmed. South Carolina's hospital systems are working through SC EMD with assistance from the Army Corps of Engineers and SC DHEC to identify and assess potential sites. Local building and fire code officials are encouraged to be a part of the process, supporting the Army Corps of Engineers in performing building assessments and in some cases, issuing temporary Certificates of Occupancy for the local buildings. State Fire provides the following guidance to building and fire code officials to assist in evaluating alternate care sites. These are intended as guidelines and suggestions, not requirements. The local AHJ should use good judgment and consider the magnitude of the event, the evaluation and coordination of other agencies, and the community impact that will occur if alternative care sites are not provided.

- I. **Design:** South Carolina Code of Laws §40-3-290 and §40-22-280 require design professionals to plan the work and alterations of buildings and structures three stories in height or greater; buildings 5000 square feet in area or greater; buildings designated as an Assembly, Educational, Hazardous or Institutional Occupancy. When possible, design professionals should be consulted for these changes of use.
  
- II. **Temporary Certificates of Occupancy and Permits:** The following code sections provide Building and Fire Code officials the ability to approve buildings for use as Alternate Care Sites on a temporary or emergency basis.

### **2018 International Building Code**

**§104.10 Modifications.** [...] the building official shall have the authority to grant modifications for individual cases, [...] provided that the building official shall first find that special individual reason makes the strict letter of this code impractical, the modification is in compliance with the intent and purpose of this code and that such modification does not lessen health, accessibility, life and fire safety or structural requirements. [...]

**§111.3 Temporary occupancy.** The building official is authorized to issue a temporary certificate of occupancy [...] provided that such [...] portions shall be occupied safely [...]

### **2018 International Fire Code**

**§104.8 Modifications.** [...] the fire code official shall have the authority to grant modifications for individual cases, provided the fire code official shall first find that special individual reason makes the strict letter of this code impractical and the modification is in compliance with the intent and purpose of this code and that such modification does not lessen health, accessibility, life and fire safety or structural requirements [...]

**Note:** Though Chapter 1 may not be adopted by your jurisdiction, certain provisions are implied to apply to the application and administration of the code.

### III. Levels of Care with Occupancy Determination

#### Isolation or Quarantine sites:

**Residential Group R-1.** Residential Group R-1 occupancies containing sleeping units where the occupants are primarily transient in nature, including: Hotels (transient)

**PERSONAL CARE SERVICE.** The care of persons who do not require medical care. Personal care involves responsibility for the safety of the persons while inside the building.

#### Low Acuity Care sites:

**Institutional Group I-1.** Institutional Group I-1 occupancy shall include buildings, structures or portions thereof for more than 16 persons, excluding staff, who reside on a 24-hour basis in a supervised environment and receive custodial care.

**CUSTODIAL CARE.** Assistance with day-to-day living tasks; such as assistance with cooking, taking medication, bathing, using toilet [...] includes persons receiving care who have the ability to respond to emergency situations and evacuate at a slower rate and/or who have mental and psychiatric complications.

#### Critical Care Sites:

**Institutional Group I-2.** Institutional Group I-2 occupancy shall include buildings and structures used for medical care on a 24-hour basis for more than five persons who are incapable of self-preservation. [...]

**MEDICAL CARE.** Care involving medical or surgical procedures, nursing or for psychiatric purposes.

**INCAPABLE OF SELF-PRESERVATION.** Persons who, because of age, physical limitations, mental limitations, chemical dependency or medical treatment, cannot respond as an individual to an emergency situation.

**A. Occupant Load:** Though 240 gross is required for inpatient treatment areas, it may be unfeasible during this crisis. As a minimum, 120 gross may be considered to allow for proper treatment and medical equipment.

**B. Fire and Life Safety:** Fire safety and evacuation plans should be revised/developed prior to occupancy and staff shall be trained in the execution and response. A full building risk assessment should be conducted with defend in place considerations. A dedicated fire watch for identified risks may be used as an alternative. Consider developing a floor plan of the facility indicating the exit paths, fire extinguishing equipment, horizontal exits (if applicable), areas of refuge, and a meeting place outside as the situation requires evacuation instead of defend in place.

Additionally, please see the attached checklist to assist you as you exercise judgment in approving possible temporary Alternate Care Sites. We also provide the attached Fire Watch Procedure form to assist in risk analysis, planning, and documentation of a Fire Watch when one is required. If you have any questions or request our assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

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## Alternate Care Site Checklist

|  |   |
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|  | <b>A. MEANS OF EGRESS</b>   |
|  | 1. EXIT DOORS UNLOCKED, UNOBSTRUCTED AND OPERABLE<br>(NO USE OF A KEY/BADGE, SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE, OR EFFORT)  |
|  | 2. EXIT CORRIDORS / STAIRS UNOBSTRUCTED   |
|  | 3. EXIT SIGNS OPERABLE/ILLUMINATED – PATH CLEARLY MARKED (ADEQUATE SIGNAGE)   |
|  | a. NOT REQUIRED FOR ROOMS OR SPACES THAT REQUIRE ONE EXIT<br>(e.g.: 50 PERSONS OR LESS, AND NOT MORE THAN 75 FEET TRAVEL TO AN EXIT)<br>(SIGNS ARE NOT REQUIRED IN INDIVIDUAL SLEEPING ROOMS) |
|  | 4. COORIDORS, AISLES AND WALKWAYS CLEAR (ADEQUATE WIDTH)  |
|  | a. MINIMUM AISLES WIDTH FOR STRETCHER MOVEMENT 72 INCHES, 96 INCHES PREFERRED   |
|  | 5. EMERGENCY LIGHTS OPERABLE/UNOBSTRUCTED – ANNUAL 90 MIN TEST COMPLETE   |
|  | 6. FIRE DOORS CLOSED OR SELF-CLOSING AND UNOBSTRUCTED   |
|  | 7. ENCLOSED STAIRWELLS FREE OF STORAGE OF COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS   |
|  | <b>B. FIRE PROTECTION</b>   |
|  | 1. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS REQUIRED: CURRENT, MOUNTED, ACCESSIBLE  |
|  | 2. STANDPIPES (IF APPLICABLE): ACCESSIBLE, CAPS IN PLACE  |
|  | 3. SPRINKLER SYSTEM REQUIRED: CURRENT SERVICE TAG/ NFPA 25 INSPECTION REPORT (ANNUAL)   |
|  | 4. SPRINKLER VALVES LABELED, LOCKED OPEN OR MONITORED   |
|  | 5. REVIEW SPRINKLER REPORT FOR VIOLATIONS   |
|  | 6. FDC: ACCESSIBLE, VISIBLE (SIGN), CAPS  |
|  | 7. FIRE ALARM: NO TROUBLE, CURRENT NFPA 72 INSPECTION REPORT (ANNUAL)   |
|  | 8. FIRE ALARM PULL STATIONS UNOBSTRUCTED, DETECTION AND NOTIFICATION REQUIRED<br>IF FOOD IS TO BE PREPARRED:  |
|  | 9. FIXED SUPPRESSION SYSTEM: CURRENT TAG AND INSPECTION REPORT (6 MONTHS)   |
|  | 10. KITCHEN HOOD: CLEAN, OPERATING, FILTERS AND GREASE CATCH PANS IN PLACE  |
|  | <b>C. HVAC</b>  |
|  | 1. PROPER VENTING FOR FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES   |
|  | 2. HVAC EQUIPMENT APPEARS TO BE IN GOOD OPERABLE CONDITION  |
|  | 3. PROPER SPACING TO COMBUSTIBLES (MINIMUM 36")   |
|  | 4. RECOMENDATIONS: SERVICED ANNUALLY, CO DETECTORS IF APPLICABLE  |
|  | <b>D. ELECTRICAL</b>  |
|  | 1. EXTENSION CORDS: TEMPORARY USE, PORTABLE APPLIANCES ONLY   |
|  | 2. NO OPEN BREAKERS, CIRCUITS LABELED, COVERS CLOSED. NO OPEN J BOXES/ELECTRICAL  |
|  | 3. CLEARANCE AROUND PANELS AND ELECTICAL DISCONNECTS (MIN. 30" W X 36" D X 78" H)   |
|  | 4. EMERGENCY AND STANDBY POWER PROVIDED FOR MEDICAL CARE - REQUIRED   |
|  | <b>E. GENERAL</b>   |
|  | 1. STORAGE OF COMBUSTIBLES: ORDERLY, NOT WITHIN 18" OF SPRINKLER HEADS  |
|  | 2. HOUSEKEEPING: OILY RAGS IN CAN W/LID, TRASH IN RECEPTACLES, NO OTHER HAZARDS   |
|  | 3. FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS CHEM STORAGE IN APPROVED CONTAINERS AND PROPERLY STORED  |
|  | 4. FIRE DEPARTMENT/EMERGENCY ACCESS APPROVED BY LOCAL AHJ   |
|  | 5. STREET ADDRESS POSTED IN POSITION TO BE SEEN FROM THE STREET, 4" TALL NUMBERS  |