



# INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

---

**Date:** June 26, 2013

**To:** Technical Services Staff

**From:** Brad Claussen, Building Official

**Subject:** 1:5 Occupant Load Factor

We have had some discussion recently about the use of certain occupant load factors, especially in assembly occupancies. The confusion centered around the use of the standing room factor of one person per five square feet in Table 1004.1.1 of the 2009 IBC and where that is appropriate to be used. This memo is intended to provide guidance in that respect.

- The factor of 1:5 should only be used in portions of larger area's such as theatre ticket lines, restaurant waiting areas, the area immediately in front of bars and dance floors.
- An overall density of 1:7 should not be exceeded for a space as a whole. If you are using a 1:5 ratio in a portion of an area, then make sure you are balancing that out with something less dense so that you do not exceed 1:7 total for the occupied space under consideration.

I confirmed that this is the intent of the code with ICC's secretary of the IBC Chapter 10 committee who told me that it has never been the intent of the IBC to allow 1:5 to be used over entire rooms or spaces and that Section 1004.2 which sets a maximum overall density of 1:7 should be taken into account. In fact, there has been some committee discussion in the past to propose a code change which would have removed the 1:5 entirely from the code although this has not yet occurred. I think this was after the nightclub fire in Rhode Island where overcrowding was a part of the problem among other things. Let me know if you have any questions.

Updated 5/18/2016