

# Information Sheet: Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) Approval During Construction

## What is a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy Approval?

A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy is a formal approval, in writing by the Building Code Official, for specified portion(s) of the structure that is satisfactorily code compliant for inhabitants to occupy and to be utilized as intended per the approved use before completion of the entirety of the structure and contains a defined period of time for occupancy.

## Criteria to Obtain a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

- An approved Building Permit is required for **all** requests of a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy. The request must be made online using eCLIPSE.
- A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy is **not** available for single-family dwellings.

## Keys Items for Completion to Obtain a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

### I. Temporary Certificate of Occupancy Approval for Portions of Multi-Story Buildings

Prior to temporary certificate of occupancy of a multi-story building, the following criteria must be met. These partial occupancy requirements are to be applied for any newly constructed building (initial occupancy) or a building that experiences a change in use group. Upon compliance with this criterion, a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy will be issued to the floor(s) or portion(s) thereof indicated in the application.

#### A. Partial Occupancy

1. Portions of the building can be occupied safely prior to full completion of the building without endangering life or public welfare.

#### B. Fire Suppression Systems

1. Where an automatic fire suppression system is required in the building, the highest occupied floor, the floor next above, and all floors below shall have an operative fire suppression system in place. A licensed fire suppression systems contractor shall attest to proper function of the system. All sprinkler valves and water flow detectors shall be tied into the fire command station.

#### C. Standpipe System

1. Where a standpipe system is required in the building, the standpipe system shall be fully operative throughout the building. A licensed fire suppression systems contractor shall attest to proper function of the system.

#### D. Alarm System

The fire alarm system shall meet the following requirements:

1. Manual pull stations shall be operative throughout the building.

2. The fire command station shall be functional with all panels necessary to display and control all components required by these rules.
3. On the occupied floor(s), all detection devices, voice alarm, public address, Fire Department communications, sprinkler valves, water flow detectors, and standby and emergency power system components must be functional.
4. Proper function of the fire alarm systems shall be attested to by a fire alarm systems inspector; including all components that are part of the electrical, mechanical, HVAC, plumbing and communications systems.

**E. Exits**

All exits shall be complete for their entire height.

1. Where exit stairs are pressurized, or smoke proof towers are designed using the mechanical ventilation alternative, such mechanical systems shall be fully operational and functional as required by the Building Code.
2. All exit stairs and paths of exit discharge shall be maintained free of debris, construction materials and any other obstructions.
3. All exits and paths of exit discharge shall be equipped with appropriate exit signs and emergency lighting.

**F. Smoke Control**

Where a smoke control system is required in the building, the smoke control system shall be fully operable. The seal of the certifying engineer shall attest to proper function of the system. The seal shall be placed on the testing documentation that is submitted to the Department upon successful completion of the acceptance testing.

**G. Elevators**

1. The elevators required by the Building Code for Fire Department emergency access, shall be complete and in full service and available to firefighting personnel.
2. Passenger elevators shall be programmed to not stop (under normal use) at unoccupied floors.
3. Fire fighter override must be operable for all elevators, and elevator landing level signs shall be in place.

**H. Shafts**

All shafts and openings shall be enclosed up to and including the floor above the highest occupied floor.

**I. Fire Command Station in High-Rise Buildings**

1. The fire command station shall be operational and tested.
2. Floors for which a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued shall be identified and recorded at the fire command station.
3. Floor plans shall be available at the fire command station.
4. Project manager and site safety manager's names shall be recorded at the fire command station.
5. Locations of construction sheds and construction offices shall be recorded at the fire command station.
6. The evacuation plan approved by the Philadelphia Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division shall be available at the fire command station.
7. A public phone shall be available at the fire command station.
8. The Fire Department communication system shall be in service at the fire command station and remote locations as required by the Fire Department.

9. The public-address system shall be functional and operating on floors for which a Certificate of Occupancy is requested.

**J. Evacuation**

An evacuation plan must be approved by the Fire Department for all high-rise buildings.

**K. Housekeeping**

Trash and construction debris must be removed from the building daily.

**L. Compressed gases, flammable/combustible liquids**

1. All LPG cylinders shall be stored and handled in accordance with NFPA 58.
2. All flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored and handled in accordance with NFPA 30.
3. The requirements of NFPA 241 "Safeguarding construction, alterations, and demolition operations" shall be applied by the City when applicable.

**M. Security:**

1. Appropriate security measures shall be the responsibility of the building owner.
2. During non-working hours, a security watch shall be established to monitor all portions of the structure within a time frame of one-hour intervals.
3. A fire watch shall be initiated when any fire protection equipment is out of service for any reason, including temporary shutdown for construction purposes.
4. The project manager and site safety manager's names shall be provided to the Fire Department responsible unit.

**N. Construction Materials:**

1. No combustible construction materials shall be stored below a floor to which a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued, unless such materials are in a storage shed of metal construction or of minimum one-hour fire resistance rated non-combustible materials and protected with rapid response sprinkler heads within.
2. Combustible construction materials shall not be stored on a floor for which a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued.

**O. Emergency Vehicle Access**

Unobstructed Fire Department vehicle access lanes to within 100 feet of the main entrance of the building shall be maintained. Where access is provided to any building approach, it shall be unobstructed.

**P. Enforcement**

If any violations of the above criteria occur, the Department of Licenses and Inspections shall issue a "Cease Operations" or "Stop Work Order" as appropriate.

**II. Certifications and Documents**

1. Fire Alarm Certification
2. Fire Suppression Certification
3. Special Inspection Final Compliance
4. Final Electrical Certification
5. Mechanical Balance Reports
6. Emergency Lighting
7. Emergency Generator Certification
8. Flood Protection Certifications
9. Elevator State Certification
10. Roof Certification