

Land Development Services
Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Fairfax County



**Phased Occupancy for
High-Rise Buildings**

LDS Standard Operating Procedure

Revision Date: 24-March-2015

Approved By:

William D. Hicks, P.E., Director

Purpose:

This policy/procedure intends to document the acceptable practice to allow incremental or phased occupancy for high-rise buildings. The below policy attempts to accommodate developer timelines and constraints that make achieving full building occupancy approval difficult or impossible. Notwithstanding, underlying this policy is the absolute need to provide safe access to and from the building (both vehicular and pedestrian) as well as a safe environment inside the facility for occupants. The policy cannot compromise on this point.

The Fire Marshal's Office, the Building Official, the Director of Site Development and Inspection Division (SDID) has agreed to the policy/procedure detailed below. While the policy/procedure envisions high-rise structures, the general tenets described herein may be applicable to any project where incremental occupancy would be appropriate.

Assumption:

There are times when securing a permit for full building occupancy (a Non-Residential Use Permit –Non-RUP) is impractical for a project. Careful planning should be given to the application and plans for a core and shell permit when a developer intends to occupy the building in a phased manner. In order to make phased occupancy as simple as possible less information should be provided in the core and shell plan submission. For example if stair and elevator shafts are the only items that appear on upper floor plans then it is easier to complete that minimal amount of work in order to occupy lower floors in a phased manner. The building must meet minimum code requirements to be granted final inspections as a shell. Any work shown on the approved plans under the related permits that exceed the minimum code requirements must also be completed.

A discussion on phased occupancy should occur at preliminary meetings in order to inform the developers and designers of the requirements early in the process.

The applicability of this mechanism for phased or partial occupancy will be determined on a case by case basis under the discretion of the Building Official.

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Responsibilities and Requirements:

The following items **MUST** be completed before considering incremental occupancy:

1. **Safety** [Lead Agency: Building Official and Director, Site Development and Inspections Division]
 - The site and building must be safe and accessible to the public prior to occupancy.
2. **Building Core and Shell Permit** [Lead Agency: Building Official]
 - All trade (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) and building permits for the core and shell must have passed final inspection.
 - Garages associated with the building core and shell permit must be completed when providing required parking.
3. **Fire Inspections** [Lead Agency: Fire Marshal]
 - Sprinklers - All sprinklers must be installed, inspected and passed for all levels of the building. Note that on unoccupied floors of levels where ceilings have not yet been installed, the sprinkler heads shall be turned up within twelve inches of the deck. The building space should be clean, free of combustible storage and ready for tenant build-out.
 - Fire Sprinkler System Flow Switches and Tamper Devices – Fire sprinkler system flow switches and tamper devices shall be connected to the fire alarm system and tested.
 - Central Station Monitoring – Required dialer testing must have been conducted and approved and central station monitoring system online and operating.
 - Fire Alarm – Building core and shell fire alarm shall be completed and approved; fire alarm for floors to be occupied shall be completed, inspected and approved. An additional buffer zone of two floors above and two floors below the occupied floors must exist. In this buffer zone, the fire alarm must be complete, inspected and approved.
 - Fire Lanes - Fire lanes must be inspected and approved.
 - Smoke Control and Stair Pressurization – Smoke control and stair pressurization must be tested and approved where applicable.
 - Occupancy Inspection – the fire marshal core and shell occupancy inspection must be completed and passed before any portion of the building is occupied.
 - Emergency Key Boxes - Emergency access key boxes installed.
4. **Site Plan/Work** [Lead Agency: Director, Site Development and Inspections Division (SDID)]

In general, site work must be substantially complete and free of construction hazards before allowing occupancy of any part of the building. All grading and landscaping around the applicable structure or structures requesting occupancy must be completed. Refer to the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance Section 18-704 – Minimum Requirements

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for issuance of RUP or NON-RUP for more details. Notwithstanding, the following list offers key items of focus:

- Final Grade - The area associated with the occupied facility must be final graded.
- Sodding and Seeding – Sodding and seeding must be completed. An exception may be granted in the winter when seeding, sodding and/or final grading is not possible due to inclement weather conditions.
- Landscaping - Landscaping and screening requirements must be completed.
- Proffers and/or Special Conditions – All proffers and/or special conditions must be completed. There may be proffers or special conditions that must be met prior to the first non-residential use permit.
- Pedestrian Access Ways – All lead walks, sidewalks, curb cut ramps with detectable warning surfaces must be installed.

5. *Building Permits Subsequent to Issuance of the Core and Shell Permit* [Lead Agency: Building Official]

- Tenant Improvements or Full Building Permits – Tenant improvement or full building permits must be obtained and receive final inspection approval for the areas proposed for occupancy. Non-RUPs will not be issued from a future tenant permit.
- Trade Permits - All trade permits must have a final inspection and approval for the area proposed to be occupied.

6. *Elevators* [Lead Agency : Building Official and Elevator Inspectors For Fairfax County]

- Core Elevators for Use by Occupants– Core elevators must be operational and levels not available to occupants of the building locked out.
- Core Elevators Designated for Construction – Core Elevators designated for construction shall be identified and passengers/occupants shall not be allowed to use construction elevators. Note that construction elevators shall be used exclusively for the transportation of construction materials to other floors or the contractor may choose to use an exterior construction hoist. All construction elevators are required to be inspected every 30 days.
- Exterior Construction Hoists – Exterior construction hoists are generally located on the corner of buildings. Consequently, those dwelling units or tenant spaces proximal to the hoist must be taken out of service until the hoist can be removed to prevent unauthorized use of the hoist.

7. *Construction Materials and Equipment* [Lead Agency: Building Official, Fire Marshal and Director, Site Review and Inspections Division]

- Construction Materials – Construction materials must be removed. All construction materials including but not limited to dumpsters, debris, future building packages, stacks of plywood, and lumber cannot be stored in fire lanes, parking spaces, accessible parking spaces or parking garages.

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- Cranes, forklifts, rollers etc. must be off site or properly secured so as not to interfere with pedestrians and emergency responders.