



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**Capitol Police Department**  
**Chief of Police Matthew S. Romei**

Memorandum

To: Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House

From: Chief Matthew Romei  
Capitol Police Department

Re: Capacity Determinations

Date: 27 July 2021

During the Committee Meeting of July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I testified briefly on the challenges of determining a capacity for a building such as the State House. Building capacity is governed mostly by the egress capacity. The determination of a capacity for most buildings is fairly straight forward. Once the type of occupancy is determined, then the determination of occupancy is a matter of measurement of square footage and exit size. However, in a building such as the State House, there is a mixture of occupancy types, and the application of certain occupancy labels to certain spaces can have a dramatic effect on the capacity of the building.

Certain plans are required for buildings such as the State House. Chapter 4 of the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) describes Evacuation and Lockdown plan requirements and contemplates special plans for gatherings of persons, evacuations of persons with disabilities, and requirements for Crowd Managers. The Capitol Police maintain the Emergency Plans and Procedures for the State House in a format consistent with the rest of State Buildings. We were making progress to fully meet the drill requirements in the Code when the COVID emergency preempted occupancy of the building.

In accordance with the desire of the Committee, I met with the Deputy State Fire Marshall on 26 July 2021 to look at the idea of a Building-Wide Capacity for the State House. Many of our spaces already have occupancy limits established as part of previous studies. As part of that process, we began to assign a capacity to rooms, based on a combination of factors:

- 15 sq ft per person (Assembly Occupancy)
- Egress Door Capacity
- Reasonable occupancy (6 for Room 2 instead of 19)
- Reduced occupancy of larger rooms such as Room 9, 10, 11 and 24.
- A “Butt in Seat” rule for committee room.

While that last part may seem odd, it is the most common measurement used in this process and is referenced by IFC Section 403.2.1. The use of a no-standing-room policy is in my opinion the best, content-neutral, equally applied plan for committee rooms, given the challenges of inward-opening doors and the other safety challenges of inputting large numbers of people into a small space.

Given these factors, we arrived with a building capacity that is actually far more people than I would want to see in the building. The Fire Marshal's Office is reviewing our process and numbers now, to validate and cross-check the numbers we arrived at.

Following that process, I met with the Sergeant at Arms, and we developed two "Building Capacity" numbers that we would recommend to the committees of jurisdiction, given that we occupy the building in two formats. Capacity #1 would be used on a day to day basis, when all the spaces in the building are in use, and Capacity #2 would be used for "events" when Committee Rooms and Offices are not occupied, and thus that space should not be included for an occupant load. Capacity #2 is smaller than Capacity #1 and both are smaller than the "Fire Code Occupancy" of the building. These numbers can be modified as we see how they work and how the building functions.

Establishing these numbers would not remove the ability to declare the building or a space within the building, at capacity once movement through the space is inhibited. Additionally, should there be a "Percentage Of" recommendation made, having these numbers established will make adjustment to that recommendation easier. My recommendation is that the Sergeant at Arms (or designee) is given the explicit authority to manage capacity within the building, subject to a capacity management plan and review.