



INFORMATION SHEET

NO. DA-15

DATE: December 6, 2023

CATEGORY: Disabled Access

SUBJECT: Drinking Fountains and Bottle-Filling Stations

PURPOSE: The purpose of this information sheet is to clarify the requirements for drinking fountains and bottle-filling (drink tap) stations.

REFERENCE: California Building Code (CBC), Current Edition
California Plumbing Code (CPC), Current Edition
San Francisco Environment Code (SFEC), Current Edition
San Francisco Plumbing Code (SFPC), Current Edition
CBC Section 11B-309 Operable parts
CBC Section 11B-211 Drinking fountains and bottle-filling stations
CBC Section 11B-602 Drinking fountains and bottle-filling stations
CPC Section 415 Drinking fountains
CPC Section 422 Minimum number of required fixtures
CPC Table 422.1 Minimum Plumbing Facilities
CPC Table 4-1 Occupant Load Factor
SFEC Chapter 23 Drink Tap Ordinance
SFPC Section 415.2.1 Drink Tap Stations
San Francisco Ordinance No. 120488

BACKGROUND: Design requirements for drinking fountains and bottle-filling stations are noted in various codes, including the CBC, CPC, SFEC and SFPC. The purpose of this information sheet is to provide guidance for navigating these codes, and to provide clarification on the various requirements for drinking fountains and bottle-filling stations.

- A. CPC Table 422.1 establishes the minimum number of drinking fountains based on occupancy and occupant load. The table notes "For requirements for persons with disabilities Chapter 11A or 11B of the California Building Code (CBC) shall be used."
- B. For drinking fountain requirements for buildings subject to CBC Chapter 11A, also known as "covered buildings," see CBC 1139A.
- C. For bottle-filling station requirements, which are not mentioned in CBC Chapter 11A, refer to CBC Chapter 11B, and SFPC.

DISCUSSION:

1. **Increased occupant load:** When changes to a building result in an increased occupant load, minimum plumbing fixtures are calculated per CPC Table 422.1. This includes new buildings, additions to buildings, and changes of occupancy or type of construction in existing buildings. Where the increase in occupant load noted above results in an occupant load of thirty or more, drinking fountains are required per CPC Table 415.2.
2. **First-time tenant improvements:** These projects are subject to the minimum plumbing fixtures listed in CPC Table 422.1.
3. **Core and shell only:** Projects in preparation of future tenant improvements, are subject to the minimum plumbing fixtures listed in CPC Table 422.1.
4. **Food establishments:** CPC Section 415.2 states "Where food is consumed indoors, water stations shall be permitted to be substituted with drinking fountains." Break rooms shall not be considered as food establishments.
5. **Accessibility:** The CPC requires drinking fountains in commercial uses to also comply with CBC Chapter 11B, where both a low and a high spout height is required. Both spout heights are permitted to be achieved with a single unit, satisfying a single plumbing fixture count. If the low and high spout height drinking fountains are provided as separate units, multiple plumbing fixture counts are satisfied.

For the purposes of this information sheet, a "low" fixture refers to fixture with maximum spout height as prescribed by CBC 11B-602.4, and a "high" fixture refers to a fixture with spout height range for standing persons as prescribed by CBC 11B-602.7.

6. **Bottle filling and drink tap stations:** CPC Section 415.2 Drinking Fountain Alternatives states, "Bottle filling stations shall be permitted to be substituted for drinking fountains up to fifty percent of requirements for drinking fountains." Therefore, if only one drinking fountain is required, then no substitution is permitted. Where multiple drinking fountains are required, up to fifty percent of the requirement is permitted to be substituted with bottle-filling stations. In addition, per SFPC Section 415.2.1 and SFEC Chapter 23 Section 2304(a), "For new construction that provides one or more drinking fountains, the project sponsor shall provide a Drink Tap Station with each such fixture installation." Where drinking fountains are provided in excess of the minimum number required by the CPC, the number of excess drinking fountains is not required to be matched by drink tap stations.

There is no distinction between the terms "drink tap station" and "bottle-filling station" when applying the CPC, CBC and SFPC.



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Patrick O'Riordan, C.B.O.
Director
Department of Building Inspection

Date

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