

Bedroom Definition Topics for Discussion

The information compiled below is provided by CRA

Thank you to EH personnel for researching and providing data regarding the bedroom definition policies from 30 counties (of the 58 total counties in CA). A few questions and observations regarding the list are noted:

- are the county definitions provided obtained from each county's respective Building Department or Environmental Health Department?
- what factors went into the decision to choose the 30 noted counties, or were these the only ones that responded?
- it appears as if 5 counties on the list have no definition or rely on the building department; 16%
- it appears as if 20 counties reference a bedroom as a minimum of 70 sq.feet; 66%
- it appears as if 10 counties allow for a 'case by case' discussion of floor plans; 33%
- it appears as if 4 counties reference closets as a bedroom requirement; 13%
- it appears as if 8 counties require that a bedroom have a legal egress; 26%
- it appears as if 4 counties reference conditioned space as a requirement; 13%
- it appears as if 7 counties require a wide entry (4-6 feet) for a room to NOT be a bedroom; 23%
- it appears as if 2 counties attach square foot limitations to the house size; 6%

As was asked in our last discussion; are we finding that residences are being over loading with occupancy that does not match the 'permitted' number of bedrooms/persons? It appears as if the bedroom definition policy has arisen out of fear, or extreme caution, not in response to problems which have occurred.

A brief search regarding the average occupancy per housing unit was conducted, using the counties on the provided EH list, as well as the State average.

The following is a summary of a brief internet search, regarding number of persons per housing unit:

• Amador 2.2	• Butte 2.2	• Calaveras 1.7	• El Dorado 2.0
• Fresno 2.9	• Imperial 3.1	• Lake 2.0	• L.A. 2.6
• Marin 2.2	• Mendocino 2.2	• Mono 1.0	• Monterey 3.0
• Napa 2.4	• Nevada 1.9	• Placer 2.4	• Riverside 2.9
• Sacramento 2.6	• San Bernardino 2.9	• San Diego 2.6	• San Joaquin 3.0
• SLO 2.2	• San Mateo 2.6	• Santa Clara 2.7	• Santa Cruz 2.4
• Solano 2.8	• Sonoma 2.3	• Sutter 2.8	• Trinity 1.9
• Tuolumne 1.7	• Yolo 2.6		

Average of all 30 counties is 2.4 persons per dwelling unit

- CA state average is 2.7 persons per dwelling unit

With a deeper search of county housing, we could prepare an analyses of persons per housing unit in un-incorporated/non sewer district portions of each county; it is not anticipated that this analyses would result in significantly different occupancy numbers per unit

Attached is a print out of the State of California definition of a bedroom

Our analyses of the housing and population data (in addition to our experience maintaining and monitoring disposal systems) leads us to believe that we have created a policy that addresses a scenario that does not exist; undersized disposal systems supporting residences with more persons than the permitted number of bedrooms.

We propose that portions of the state definition be used, with modifications to our current policy, including;

- bedrooms shall maintain a minimum 70 square foot minimum, with 7 foot width
- bedrooms shall be along exterior walls with a legal egress
- bedrooms shall be located within a structure that is conditioned space
- bedrooms shall be accessed through a hallway, not through another bedroom
- a loft, with a half wall or railing, shall not be considered a bedroom
- a room with a door-less access opening of 4 feet or more shall not be considered a bedroom
- a case-by case review of the proposed floor plans could be requested, with discussions including the homeowner, architect and EH Program Manager to determine the final bedroom count

OR

- the on-site sewage disposal system shall match the number of bedrooms as acknowledged on the building permit

In California, a legal bedroom must have **at least 70 sq ft (ideally 7ft horizontally in any direction), a minimum 7ft ceiling height, a closet, a permanent heat source, and an operable window for egress/ventilation**. It must have a door for privacy and cannot be a walkthrough to another bedroom.  Streamline Design & Permitting +3

Key Requirements for a California Bedroom:

- **Size:** Minimum of 70 square feet, and usually at least 7 feet in any horizontal direction.
- **Egress Window (Safety):** Must have a window for emergency escape. This window must have an openable area of at least 5.7 sq ft, a minimum net clear opening height of 24 inches, and width of 20 inches, with the sill no more than 44 inches off the floor.
- **Closet:** While the International Residential Code does not strictly require one, local California jurisdictions and appraisers often require a closet for it to be deemed a bedroom, as it is a standard expectation.
- **Heat Source:** A permanent, safe heating system is required; portable space heaters do not count.
- **Ceiling Height:** Generally, a minimum of 7 feet, with at least 50% of the ceiling having this height.
- **Access:** The room must be accessed through a hallway or living space, not directly through another bedroom.  Streamline Design & Permitting +6

Common Misconceptions & Definitions

- **Non-conforming Bedroom:** A room that looks like a bedroom but lacks an egress window or closet is often called a "den," "office," or "study" in listing descriptions.
- **Basements:** These can be bedrooms only if they meet the strict, legal egress requirements.
- **Doors to Garages:** A bedroom cannot have a door that opens directly into a garage.  IM Home Inspections +3

In summary, a legal bedroom is primarily defined by safety—specifically, its ability to act as a living space with proper ventilation and emergency exit capabilities. 