

Mendocino County Division of Environmental Health

Policy 4200.04

BEDROOM DEFINITION

Intent and Benefit

To establish a consistent and code-compliant definition of a bedroom for use in environmental health, occupancy determinations, program compliance, and to ensure alignment with on-site wastewater system design capacity and public health standards.

This policy definition is intended to size the on-site sewage system to the number of bedrooms proposed in the residence regardless of how any particular resident might be utilizing the structure at any given point in time. This definition will provide a common language for the discussion of residential structure size as it relates to the sizing of the on-site sewage system.

Background Information

Various informal definitions of a bedroom have been used in the past. This has led to confusion and a lack of consistency among EH staff. The County building department does not have a definition for a bedroom and thus the policy is necessary for purposes of sizing on-site sewage systems. An objective definition of room utilization is needed to ensure the number of bedrooms in a residence is the same number of bedrooms accounted for in the sizing of the on-site sewage system.

Statement of Problem

Applicants apply for a building application siting a different number of bedrooms than those listed in the on-site sewage system plans. In order to release a building application, the two need to match. Having a clear definition of how to count bedrooms is needed to ensure consistent submissions and reviews.

Details of Policy Procedures

A bedroom, for purposes of sizing on-site sewage systems, shall be defined as: any room with legal egress (as defined by the California Building Code) that is designated by applicant as a “bedroom”; other rooms, such as sewing rooms, dens, offices, studios, lofts, game rooms, etc. shall also be considered as bedrooms. For the purposes of this policy, a tiny home is at least one bedroom.

Room features must be clearly labeled on the floor plans submitted to Mendocino County Planning and Building Services (PBS) to ensure proper evaluation.

Rooms having one or more of the following features shall not be considered by the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) to constitute a bedroom:

1. A 4-foot wide or greater arched frameless doorway without a door which opens onto the entry way or a main activity area.
2. If the space uses a half wall or railing along at least one side of the room.
3. If the space is a loft without its own independent full bathroom.
4. If the space is 70 square feet or less.
5. If the space is an interior room that must be passed through to access another bedroom.
6. If the space is not a conditioned space*.

In the case of existing homes for which the number of bedrooms is unknown, but the square footage of the structure is known, EH will assume the following bedroom counts unless a floor plan for the structure is submitted:

<u>Gross Floor Area</u>	<u>No. of Bedrooms</u>
0 – 1500 SF	1
1501 – 2100 SF	2
2101 – 3000 SF	3
Over 3001 SF	4

Plans may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the EH department, when it is not clear as to whether or not a room is a bedroom.

* For the purposes of this policy, conditioned space is defined as follows:

1. An area or room within a building being heated or cooled containing uninsulated related ducts or with a fixed opening directly into an adjacent conditioned space.
2. A space is conditioned if it is heated or cooled directly or where a space is indirectly supplied with heating or cooling through uninsulated walls, floors or uninsulated ducts or heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) piping.
3. A cooled space is an enclosed space within a building that is cooled by a cooling system whose sensible output capacity exceeds 5 Btu/h-ft² of floor area.
4. A directly conditioned space is an enclosed space that is provided with:
 - a. Wood heating
 - b. Mechanical heating that has a capacity exceeding 10 Btu/hr-ft²
 - c. Mechanical cooling that has a capacity exceeding 5 Btu/hr-ft²

Conditioned space is defined as “an enclosed space within a building that is directly conditioned or indirectly conditioned.”

A **directly conditioned space** generally includes an enclosed space provided with wood heating, mechanical heating exceeding 10 Btu/hr per square foot, or mechanical cooling exceeding 5 Btu/hr per square foot. Process spaces are excluded from this definition.

A space may also be considered **indirectly conditioned** when it is not directly heated or cooled but is substantially open or thermally connected to an adjacent conditioned space, or when conditioned air is intentionally transferred into the space at a rate exceeding three air changes per hour.

Unconditioned space is defined as an enclosed space within a building that is not conditioned space per the definition outlined in Section 100.1 of the California Energy Code, Title 24, Part 6.

Effective Date: July 1, 2007

Revised Date: July 30, 2026

Director's Initials: