



**OCEAN CITY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

Subject: Single Family Clarification in Occupancy Classifications	Memo #: 2012-001
	Effective: July 13, 2012
Authority: Deputy Chief David Hartley, Fire Marshal	Internal (FMO Staff)

**Background**

Fire Marshal's Office staff responds to and evaluates fire code issues in the City's numerous residential occupancies. It is necessary for investigating personnel to accurately evaluate the occupancy use of the structure or dwelling unit, prior to selecting and applying the most appropriate occupancy classification and subsequent code-requirements.

Frequently, accurate classification of overcrowded residential occupancies (1/2 family dwellings, lodging/rooming houses, dormitories, apartment buildings) are complicated by the co-dependent definitions of each occupancy type, of which many depend heavily on the clear determination of what constitutes a "single-family dwelling," in which no clear definition of "family" is provided. This memorandum serves to clarify and provide guidance related to residential occupancy definitions.

**Example Definitions**

NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code*, 2012 edition (as amended by the MD State Fire Prevention Code, adopted by the OCFPC), Section 24.1.1.1, applies the requirements for one- and two-family dwellings, to:

"those buildings containing not more than two dwelling units in which each dwelling unit is occupied by members of single family with not more than five outsiders."

Section 26.1.1.1 applies the requirements for "lodging and rooming houses" to:

"those buildings that do not qualify as 1 & 2 family dwellings that provide sleeping accommodations for 16 or fewer persons on either a transient or permanent basis, with or without meals, but without separate cooking facilities for individual occupants, except as provided in Chapter 24."

**Directive**

For the purposes of consistent and accurate interpretation of occupancy classifications, inspectors are directed to utilize the following definition of "family" for pertinent occupancy classifications:

**A group of persons not exceeding the number of occupants allowed by building and housing code regulations, who are familiar with each other, living together in one dwelling unit, acting as a single household, sharing all areas of the dwelling unit.**

It will be up to the individual inspector to substantiate the inherent requirements contained herein.