

Winery building code FAQs

When does a winery require a building permit?

Per section 91.1.105 of the County of San Diego Building Code, a permit is required whenever a building or structure is constructed, enlarged, altered, moved, or converted. Therefore any building or structure serving functions of the winery – i.e., tasting rooms, production/storage areas, restrooms, outdoor patios, other public spaces – are subject to permit, whether it is new construction or existing construction converted to a new use.

Why is a building permit required?

A permit verifies the project – through the plan check and inspection process – meets the minimum code requirements to protect occupants and emergency personnel against fire and other hazards. These provisions ensure adequate structural strength, exiting, fire protection, accessibility, sanitation, interior environment, and energy efficiency.

What building code occupancy classifications apply to wineries?

The occupancy classification of a particular space establishes the construction, exiting, fire protection, and other code requirements applicable to that space. Winery rooms and spaces shall be classified as follows per the *California Building Code* (CBC):

- A-2 for tasting rooms of 750 square feet or more (CBC 303.1)
- B for tasting rooms less than 750 square feet (CBC 303.1)
- F-1 for wine production areas (CBC 306.2)
- S-1 for wine storage areas (CBC 311.2)

In determining tasting room occupancy classification, restrooms may be considered accessory space and not included in square footage calculation.

Do winery buildings require sprinklers?

Per section 96.1.903.2 of the County of San Diego Consolidated Fire Code, sprinklers shall be installed in all new winery structures. Alterations or conversions of existing construction may require sprinklers if significant modification to interior or roof is proposed and cost of sprinkler installation does not exceed 15 percent of construction cost.

What winery elements must meet disabled access requirements?

Wineries are considered public accommodations per CBC 202 definition, and thus all interior and exterior areas intended for use by patrons – including any spaces included on facility tours – shall be accessible per CBC chapter 11B. These requirements include – but may not be limited to – the following:

- Parking (CBC 1129B)
- Exterior routes of travel (CBC 1127B and CBC 1133B)
- Building entrances, exits, and interior paths of travel (CBC 1133B)
- Restrooms (CBC 1115B)
- Seating, counters, and bars (CBC 1104B.5 and CBC 1122B)
- Signage (CBC 1117B.5)
- Employee areas (CBC 1123B and CBC 1104B.5)

Spaces not typically occupied – such as maintenance rooms, utility sheds, crawl spaces, etc. – are exempt from accessibility provisions.

How many restrooms must the winery provide?

A single unisex restroom is sufficient for wineries with small tasting rooms (less than 750 square feet), limited outdoor patios (maximum 300 square feet), and no public events. All other wineries will require separate gender restrooms with fixture count determined per *California Plumbing Code* Table 4-1 and based on cumulative tasting room, outdoor patio, and event area. Any restrooms serving the winery shall meet the accessibility provisions of CBC 1115B.

Do additional requirements apply to winery caves?

Yes. CBC 436 specifically addresses subterranean space for winery facilities in natural or manmade caves. The section applies to winery caves accessible or not accessible to the public and includes more restrictive provisions for fire protection and exiting.