

Cinemas in Non-domestic Buildings or Composite Buildings

Under regulation 49B of the Building (Planning) Regulations (B(P)R), a cinema or cinemas accommodating not more than 2,000 people in aggregate may be situated in any storey or storeys of a non-domestic building or the non-domestic part of a composite building. A pair or group of such cinemas may share exits, foyers, waiting spaces, vestibules and projection rooms. Apart from the relevant provisions of the Buildings Ordinance and the requirements in the Code of Practice for the Provision of Means of Escape in Case of Fire (the 'MOE Code'), the Code of Practice for Fire Resisting Construction (the 'FRC Code') and the Code of Practice for Means of Access for Firefighting and Rescue (the 'MOA Code'), the requirements stipulated in this practice note shall also apply to such cinemas.

Shared Exits

General Requirements

2. Notwithstanding paragraph 23.2 of the MOE Code, cinemas in a non-domestic building or non-domestic part of a composite building may share the exit routes with other accommodations of non-domestic use in the same building, subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- (a) all cinema boxes should be provided with a dedicated smoke extraction system and other fire services installations to the satisfaction of the Director of Fire Services;
- (b) all cinema boxes should be separated from other accommodations with fire resisting walls and floors having adequate fire resistance period (FRP) as specified in the FRC Code. Every door to a cinema box should have an FRP of not less than that required for the walls of the cinema box. Door openings at cinema boxes giving access to the cinema foyer(s) or the adjoining non-domestic accommodations are not required to be provided with a protected lobby under this situation;
- (c) Fire separation should be provided between the cinema boxes and the cinema foyers in accordance with the requirements in (b) above. Such fire separation is not required if the smoke extraction system is also provided to the cinema foyer(s) to the satisfaction of the Director of Fire Services and, in such case, adequate fire separation should be provided between the foyers and other accommodations of the building. Any opening made in the separating walls between the cinema foyers and the adjoining non-domestic accommodations for communication should be protected by a door or a fire shutter with the same FRP as the wall;

- (d) The exits that serve both the cinema and the adjoining accommodations should be accessible from the common circulation area of the building without having to pass through other private premises;
- (e) If a staircase is directly connected to a cinema or a group of cinemas at any one storey where occupants of the cinemas do not need to pass through the adjoining non-domestic accommodations to reach the staircase, the entire staircase should be constructed in compliance with the requirements set out in paragraphs 17.2 (b) and 26.2 of the MOE Code;
- (f) The shared exits should have adequate widths and sizes, based on the total capacity of the cinemas and the adjoining non-domestic accommodations in accordance with the requirements set out in paragraphs 4 to 7 below;
- (g) In a composite building, the exit routes of the cinemas must be separated from the exit routes of the domestic parts of the building;
- (h) The exit routes of the cinemas including those shared exits should discharge to streets of not less than 4.5m wide. Two of the exit routes from each floor should discharge into different thoroughfares; and
- (i) The cinemas are not situated at basement.

Entrance to a Cinema

3. The entrance to a cinema or to the cinema foyer may be provided through the circulation areas of the adjoining non-domestic accommodations, such as shopping arcade, subject to compliance with the requirements mentioned above.

Width of Exit Routes

4. The width of each exit route and the total width of all the exit routes from the cinemas should be not less than the width shown in Table 2 of the MOE Code. In the case of any cinemas or portion thereof which are 12m or more above pavement level, the width of each exit route and the total width of all the exit routes should be not less than that required in paragraph 25.1, 25.3 and 25.4 of the MOE Code.

5. Where a cinema or a group of cinemas share the exit routes with any part of the adjoining non-domestic accommodations at the same storey of the building, the total numbers and minimum width of the exit routes required for the cinemas and that part of the adjoining accommodations designated to share the exit routes with the cinemas should be determined in accordance with the requirements specified in paragraph 4 above, based on the total number of persons of both the cinemas and the relevant part of the adjoining accommodations.

6. If the required width of a shared exit route on a particular floor is greater than that required for the floors below, the exit staircase from that particular floor downward to the ground level should be of the width not less than that required for that particular floor.

Horizontal Exits

7. Subject to the following requirements, some of the exits from the cinemas may discharge through the adjoining non-domestic accommodations (e.g. shopping arcade) to the protected staircases or routes on the same floor provided that:

- (a) the width of such exits from a cinema should be not more than half of the total width of exits required for that cinema; and
- (b) the common circulation areas of the adjoining non-domestic accommodations, including the cinema foyer through which exits from the cinemas will discharge, should have a floor area of not less than 0.5m^2 per person based on the sum of:
 - (i) the total number of persons in the cinemas which is allowed in the design for evacuation through such exits to the adjoining non-domestic accommodations, calculated on a pro-rata basis by reference to the width of such exits and the total width of the exits required for the cinemas;
 - (ii) the number of persons in the cinema foyer calculated at a ratio of one person per 0.5m^2 of the floor area of the foyer; and
 - (iii) the number of persons in the circulation areas of the adjoining non-domestic accommodation calculated in accordance with Table 1 of the MOE Code.

Gangways and Seatways

8. The seating layout of the cinemas should comply with the following requirements:

- (a) The maximum length of a row of seats in a cinema box should not exceed 12m for a seatway with gangway on one side only, and 24m for a seatway with gangways on two sides; and
- (b) The number of seats in a row should not be more than that set out in Table A in accordance with the width of seatway.

Table A – Maximum number of seats in a row

Width of Seatway (mm)	Maximum number of seats in a row	
	Gangway on one side	Gangway on two sides
300 to 324	7	14
325 to 349	8	15
350 to 374	9	18
375 to 399	10	20
400 to 424	11	22
425 to 449	12	24
450 to 474	12	26
475 to 499	12	28
500 or more	Limited by the maximum length of seatway of 12m	Limited by the maximum length of seatway of 24m

The width of seatway is the minimum clear horizontal distance between the back of one seat unit and the nearest projection of the seat unit in the row behind. Where seats tip up automatically, the width of seatway should be measured between the back of one seat unit and the maximum projection of the seat unit behind when the seat is in the tipped-up position.

9. Gangways of not less than the width shown in Table B should be provided.

Table B – Minimum width of gangways

No. of persons served	Minimum width of gangways
Less than 500	1 100 mm each
501 - 1000	1 200 mm each
1001 – 1500	1 350 mm each
over 1500	1 500 mm each

Projection Rooms

10. All projectors and the associated equipment shall be placed within a projection room or projection rooms which are separated from the cinemas and other accommodations by walls and floors having an FRP of not less than 1 hour. Every door to a projection room shall have a leakage rate of not exceeding $3\text{m}^3/\text{hour}/\text{m}$ (head and jambs only) when tested at 25 Pa under BS 476: Section 31.1 and with FRP of not less than 1 hour. The above requirements shall not apply to cinemas where no film projector, or electric arc, xenon, or other light source projection equipment which generates hazardous gases, dust or radiation, is used.

11. The exit routes from the projection rooms should comply with requirements in the MOE Code. However, an elevated projection room associated to one cinema box only may be provided with only one exit if the sum of its direct distance and travel distance complies with paragraph 14(3)(b) of the MOE Code. The exit or one of the exits from such projection room may discharge through the seating area of the cinema box it serves to the exit staircase.

12. A projection room suite, if not provided with natural ventilation, must be mechanically ventilated to the open air by an independent system.

Cinema Foyers

13. Accommodation for persons awaiting admission required under regulation 49E of the B(P)R shall be provided on the basis of 0.5m² per person at a ratio of one in six persons for whom seating accommodation is provided.

Cinemas in Basements

14. Cinemas in basements should comply with the requirements in paragraph 23.3 of the MOE Code. In addition, the following requirements apply:

(a) **Foyers**

The foyers shall be located on the ground floor. The minimum size of the foyer shall be based on 0.5m² per person at a ratio of one in three persons for whom seating accommodation is provided.

(b) **Lifts**

All lifts serving other floors may open into the cinema or cinemas through a protected lobby.

The fireman's lift shall open into the ventilated lobby in the fire-fighting and rescue stairway and such lobby shall give access to the cinema boxes.

(c) **Separation**

All parts of a cinema or cinemas must be separated from other parts of the buildings by walls, floors or other elements of construction having a FRP of not less than 4 hours. Reference should also be made to paragraph 6.2 and 15 of the FRC Code.

Cinema with Capacity of Less Than 50 persons

15. A cinema with a capacity not exceeding 50 persons may share the exit routes with other non-domestic accommodations in the same building and the requirements stipulated in this PNAP and in Part III of the MOE Code on means of escape for places of public entertainment do not apply to such a cinema, provided that:

- (a) the total capacity in aggregate for all such cinemas, each having a capacity not exceeding 50 persons, in the same building is not more than 150 persons;
- (b) such cinema is not situated in basement;

- (c) any projection room, if provided, shall comply with the requirements specified in paragraphs 10 to 12 above; and
- (d) a cinema foyer is provided in accordance with paragraph 13 above.

Installation of Cinema Seats

16. It is acknowledged that extensive renovation and fitting out works will usually be carried out by the cinema operators after the issue of the occupation permit (OP) for the building in which the cinema is situated. In order to minimize unnecessary waste in the replacement of seats, the Building Authority will not require the installation of cinema seats prior to the issue of OP, provided that the overall layout of ganyways and seatways are properly demarcated on site and an undertaking from the developer/Authorized Person is submitted confirming that the seats would be installed before an application for the cinema licence is made.



(Marco M H WU)
Building Authority

Ref. : BD GP/LEG/2 (V)

First issued July 1978

The 2nd revision May 1994

This revision September 2005 (AD/Support)

Index under : Cinemas in Non-domestic Buildings or Composite Buildings - Places of Public Entertainment Regulations
Places of Public Entertainment Regulations - Cinemas in Non-domestic Buildings or Composite Buildings