

certificates of occupancy

No one may legally occupy a building until the Department has issued a Certificate of Occupancy or Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

A Certificate of Occupancy — or CO — states a building's legal use and/or type of permitted occupancy. New buildings must have a CO, and existing buildings must have a current or amended CO when construction will change their use, egress or type of occupancy.

The Department issues a final Certificate of Occupancy when the completed work matches the submitted plans for new buildings or major alterations. It issues a Letter of Completion for minor alterations to properties. These documents confirm the work complies with all applicable laws, all paperwork has been completed, all fees owed to the Department have been paid, all relevant violations have been resolved and all necessary approvals have been received from other City agencies.

Checking a Property's CO

Using the Project's Job/CO Number:

- 1) Use the "Buildings Information System" at nyc.gov/buildings, and click the center button to enter BIS.
- 2) At the "Buildings Information Search" screen, click the "Applications link."
- 3) At the "C.O. Application Number" section, type in the project's job (same as the CO number) and click "Go." The "C/O Application Summary Inquiry Screen" will show the status of the application.
- 4) Click on "All Requirements and All Objections" for information on items or issues to be resolved.

Using the Property Address:

- 1) Use the "Buildings Information System" at nyc.gov/buildings; select the borough and type in the address.
- 2) Click on "View Certificates of Occupancy" to view an existing CO. For pending COs, click on "Jobs/Filings" near the bottom of the page.
- 3) Once you find the pending job you're interested in, click the link. The "Application Details" page will appear. Use the "C/O Summary" and "C/O Preview" links for information.

Getting a Copy of a CO

You can print a copy of a building's CO from any computer. Use the Buildings Information System to look up the property. In the building's profile, the "View Certificates of Occupancy" link will display the CO. You can also visit any Department customer service counter.

Proof of a Building's Legal Use Without a CO

Buildings built before 1938 aren't required to have a Certificate of Occupancy — unless later alterations changed its use, egress or occupancy. If you require proof of a building's legal use — and it's exempt from the CO requirement — contact the Department's borough office where the property is located to request a Letter of No Objection.

Temporary CO

Owners must make sure a building or unit has a Certificate of Occupancy. In some circumstances, the Department may determine that a property is safe to occupy, but there are outstanding issues requiring final approval. A Temporary Certificate of Occupancy — or TCO — indicates that the property is safe for occupancy, but it has an expiration date. TCOs typically expire 90 days after they are issued.

When a TCO expires and is not renewed, it may be difficult or impossible to buy insurance or sell or refinance the property. Buyers should seriously consider negotiating a closing based upon a CO, not a TCO. If the property has a TCO, consult with a New York State licensed professional engineer or registered architect to determine the outstanding issues — and speak with an attorney regarding the TCO status.