



FACT SHEET:

'WEDDING BARN' AND THE BUILDING CODE

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

Old barns have become a popular venue for weddings, receptions, family reunions and similar gatherings.

What are the main code-related issues that should be considered?

As an existing building, the barn would be subjected to the requirements of the Minnesota Conservation Code for Existing Buildings. In most instances, this would constitute a change of use as the barn was likely agricultural and exempt from the code under Minnesota Statutes § 326B.121. Converting a barn for weddings and similar functions reclassifies the building as an assembly use.

The biggest code issues that may arise from this change of use/occupancy classification are:

- Requirement for an automatic sprinkler system for assembly occupancies.
- Accessibility to the building, rest rooms and elevated levels or floors.
- Minimum number of sanitation facilities (toilets, lavatories and drinking fountains).
- Door swing, panic/fire exit hardware.
- Exit signs and emergency illumination.
- Fire detectors both manual and automatic.
- Allowable area and height based on the type of construction and occupancy classification.
- Structural – most barns were never designed for the assembly use and, if exempt as agricultural, there is a good chance that the required snow and wind loads were not considered as for commercial buildings.



Does converting a barn to an assembly use require having plans prepared?

Yes, because this changes the purpose and puts the barn into a higher risk use, plans for the barn's conversion must be prepared by Minnesota licensed architects and engineers.

Does the new law for places of public accommodation apply to barns that are converted for weddings or receptions?

Yes, if the barn contains a room or space having an occupant load of 200 or more.

Who enforces the building code on wedding barns?

As of July 1, 2017, where there is no local government building official, plans must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) for building code review and approval before construction can begin. DLI issues permits and inspects the construction of public assembly spaces in all non-code enforced areas.