

What is an alteration?

An alteration is any **structural change** on a premises that may or may not increase the square footage of the existing approved premises' floorplan. Contact Cannabis & Alcohol Regulation Division (CARD) for your approved floorplan if you are unsure of what your approved floorplan looks like. Cosmetic changes such as painting, carpeting, or other interior decorating are not considered an alteration. Some examples of a structural change or "alteration" are:

- Tearing down or adding a wall.
- Installing a drive-through window.
- Expanding into a new space not on your approved floorplan.
- Adding to the approved floorplan or removing a deck from the approved floorplan.

Things to consider before starting an alteration:

- Premises must meet suitability based on the license type.
- Alterations must be completed within one year of starting the alteration process or a new application must be submitted to the CARD.
- Building, health, fire, and premises inspection approvals:
 - Check local ordinances **BEFORE** starting the alteration.
 - Conditional use permits or other permits may be needed.
 - Existing building deficiencies may require attention.
 - **See Allowance A below** when building, health, and fire approvals may not be needed.
 - You **MUST** attest to whether a building permit is required. **NOTE:** If you attest a permit is not required and CARD finds that your alteration did require a building permit, your license may be subject to a violation.
- Staying open or not:
 - A licensed retail business may stay open during an alteration but must maintain suitability based on your license type when operating.
 - A licensed retail business closed for an alteration must **report nonuse** to CARD **BEFORE being closed** longer than 90 days and may not be on nonuse longer than one year.
 - A licensed on-premises retail business with a catering endorsement may not cater events while on nonuse.

BEFORE STARTING - Notifying CARD when planning an alteration: This applies to all license types. Alterations that **DO increase the square footage** of the existing approved premises must be received and an approval to begin must be sent by CARD **BEFORE** starting the alteration, and the licensee must:

- Provide a copy of the proposed floorplan and alteration request form to CARD **BEFORE** starting the alteration. See the Floor Plan Fact Sheet for what is required on a floor plan. [Floor-Plan Fact-Sheet Final-updated-9.2024.pdf](#)
- Meet the requirements in section [16-3-311](#), MCA.
- Notify CARD if the completed alteration differs from the approved alteration request due to modifications required by other state or governmental officials. **See Allowance B below.**

WITHIN 7 DAYS AFTER STARTING - Notifying CARD when planning an alteration:

Applies to retail license types. Alterations that **DO NOT increase the square footage** of the existing approved premises must:

- Provide a copy of the **proposed floorplan** and **alteration request form** to CARD within 7 days after starting the alteration. See the Floor Plan Fact Sheet for what is required on a floor plan. [Floor-Plan Fact-Sheet Final-updated-9.2024.pdf](#)
- Meet the requirements in section [16-3-311](#), MCA.
- Notify CARD if the completed alteration differs from the approved alteration request due to modifications required by other state or governmental officials. **See Allowance B below.**

Allowance A: Building, health, and fire approvals may not be needed for an alteration

If the alteration does not require the licensee to obtain a building permit, then the inspections by local government agencies may not be required for department approval. If you notify the department that the alteration does not require a building permit and it is discovered the alteration does require a permit, your license may be subject to a violation.

Allowance B: Completed alterations

If a completed alteration differs from the approved alteration due to modifications required for approval by other state or local government entities, such as compliance with fire or building codes, CARD must be notified. However, preapproval is not required for these modifications.

When an alteration is considered completed and approved:

It is important not to use the new area until the alteration has been completed and approved. Alterations are considered completed and approved when all of the following are met:

- If a building permit was required, building, health, and fire officials notified the licensing specialist with their approval.
- A premises inspection is conducted, and the licensing specialist verifies the premises match the proposed submitted floorplan and meet suitability.
- The licensing specialist sends an alteration approval letter.
- This approval letter allows the licensee to use the newly altered or added premises.

Questions? [Contact an Alcohol Licensing Specialist](#)

All licensees and permit holders must comply with all Federal and Montana alcoholic beverage laws and rules.

SECTIONS [16-3-311](#), MCA, [16-4-402](#), MCA, and ARM [42.12.106](#), [42.12.145](#), [42.12.146](#), [42.12.147](#), [42.12.148](#), [42.12.149](#), and [42.13.106](#).

[12.2024](#) Please note the information in department communications may have been modified, superseded, or made obsolete by changes in federal or state law or the Administrative Rules of Montana. If you need to verify the current validity of any Department of Revenue communication, please contact us.

