

**FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 250: 1918
(DESIGN OCCUPANT FACTORS-DEPARTMENT STORES)**

By Richard Schulte

The twenty-second Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in Chicago in May 1918. Part of the Committee Report on Fire Resistive Construction included the topic of egress for department stores. The following excerpt addresses the determination of the design occupant loads for department stores:

“As the number of persons occupying an area in a department store cannot be controlled, exits shall be provided on the assumption that there may be an average of one person for each thirty-two square feet of floor space (irrespective of counters, etc.) on the upper floors, and one person for each twenty-five square feet on the ground floor and basement.”

Today, the International Building Code, NFPA 5000 and the Life Safety Code require that an occupant load factor of 30 square feet per person be utilized to determine the design occupant load of the first floor and levels below in mercantile occupancies. An occupant load factor of 60 square feet per person is required to be utilized to determine the design occupant loads of floors above the first floor in mercantile occupancies.

* * * * *

Source: *“Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual [NFPA] Meeting”*, Chicago, Illinois, 1918.

Copyright © 2013
Richard C. Schulte