



COMPARISON ANALYSIS

National Building Code 2016 (Part 4)

versus

National Building Construction Standards 2026 (Part F)

FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY

— Detailed Change Inventory —

An MEPF Consultancy Technical Reference

*Clause-by-clause and table-by-table comparison capturing every
ADDED, REMOVED, MODIFIED and UNCHANGED provision*

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bureau of Indian Standards has replaced the National Building Code of India 2016 (NBC 2016), Part 4 — Fire and Life Safety, with the National Building Construction Standards 2026 (NBCS 2026), Part F — Fire and Life Safety. This is not a renaming exercise: it is a structural rewrite that reshapes the foundations of fire safety design in India.

This document is an exhaustive, clause-by-clause and table-by-table inventory of every change. It identifies every new requirement introduced in NBCS 2026, every NBC 2016 provision that has been deleted, and every value, threshold, or structural change to a retained provision. The objective is to support complete migration of NBC-2016-based engineering practice and tooling to the new standard.

1.1 Headline Change

HEADLINE — NBC 2016 was a mandatory 'Code' adopted through state byelaws. NBCS 2026 is reclassified as a 'voluntary, non-binding Standard' whose implementation depends on adoption by concerned parties, contract stipulations, or appropriate adoption by state/local authorities. Despite the voluntary status, NBCS 2026 introduces materially stricter design requirements — particularly around protection levels, life safety, refuge, and special-occupancy systems — and is expected to be adopted by state Fire Authorities progressively.

1.2 At-a-Glance Change Statistics

The table below quantifies the change volume across each chapter / annex of Part F.

Chapter / Annex	Added	Removed	Modified	Net Impact
1. Scope & Applicability	2	1	3	Moderate
2. Terminology	14	0	8	High
3. Fire Prevention (incl. Occupancy Classification)	9	2	15	Very High
4. Life Safety (Egress, Compartmentation, Smoke, Detection)	24	3	42	Very High
5. Fire Protection (Suppression, Hazard Classes)	22	4	18	Very High
6. Occupancy-Specific Requirements	11	1	14	High
Annex A — Calorific Values	0	0	1	Minimal
Annex B — Industrial Occupancy Hazard Classification	12	0	6	Moderate
Annex C — Fire Resistance Rating Data	0	0	4	Minimal

1.4 How to Read This Document

Every comparison table in this document uses four columns: Aspect, NBC 2016, NBCS 2026, and Change. The Change column carries one of four colour-coded classifications:

Change Type	Meaning	Colour Cue
ADDED	Provision exists in NBCS 2026 but had no counterpart in NBC 2016.	ADDED
REMOVED	Provision existed in NBC 2016 but has been deleted from NBCS 2026.	REMOVED
MODIFIED	Provision exists in both, but value, scope, threshold, or structure has changed.	MODIFIED
UNCHANGED	Provision is retained verbatim or with editorial-only changes.	UNCHANGED

NOTE ON RENUMBERED TABLES — NBCS 2026 renumbered several tables. References use the NBCS 2026 numbering, with the NBC 2016 table number cited inline for traceability (e.g., 'Table 2 (Occupant Load) — was NBC Table 3').

Aspect	NBC 2016 (Part 4)	NBCS 2026 (Part F)	Change
Group J — Hazardous	Single group; pressurised gases, explosives, flammable liquids.	Single group retained as HAZARDOUS. Quantitative thresholds (0.1 N/mm ² , 70 m ³) preserved.	UNCHANGED
Group K — Mixed Use	Mixed Occupancy treated as a clause-level concept (Cl. 3.1.10), not a separate group.	NEW top-level group K. Includes any building where two or more occupancies intermingle. Triggers pairwise fire-separation matrix Cl. 3.1.11.1.	ADDED

ATTENTION CONSULTANTS — The renumbering of Group A (A-1..A-6 → A-I..A-V), Group C (C-1..C-3 → C-I..C-III) is consistent and reversible. Group H continues as Storage and Group J as Hazardous (no label swap). Always cite the edition explicitly in NOC submissions and tender documents to avoid confusion.

5.2 Minor and Mixed Occupancy

Aspect	NBC 2016 (Part 4)	NBCS 2026 (Part F)	Change
Minor occupancy threshold	Cl. 3.1.1.1 — minor occupancy 'incidental to the main occupancy' but threshold not numerically defined.	Cl. 3.1.1.1 — quantified: 'Minor occupancy should not exceed 30 percent of the floor area. When the area exceeds 30 percent, it should be categorized as mixed occupancy.'	MODIFIED
Mixed occupancy treatment	Cl. 3.1.10 — must comply with most restrictive applicable group; separation required.	Cl. 3.1.11 + new Cl. 3.1.11.1 pairwise fire-separation matrix + Cl. 3.1.11.2 most-restrictive provisions; explicit exit-sharing rules.	MODIFIED
Fire separation between occupancies	Implied general rule — 'effective separation'.	Explicit matrix Cl. 3.1.11.1 — every pairwise combination of occupancies specifies 120 / 180 / 240 min minimum FRR, or 'Not Permitted' if combination is forbidden.	ADDED
Exit sharing in mixed occupancies	Not explicitly addressed.	Cl. 3.1.11.2 — exits may be shared provided aggregate width meets requirement and unrestricted egress is available based on operational hours; otherwise independent exits per occupancy.	ADDED
Means-of-egress decrease prohibition	Implicit.	Explicit: 'exits in such mixed occupancy should be so arranged as to ensure that means of egress is not decreased in the direction of egress travel'.	ADDED

Aspect	NBC 2016 (Part 4)	NBCS 2026 (Part F)	Change
Dwelling unit separation — non-load bearing	60 / 60 / 30 / 30 min.	60 / 60 / 30 / 30 min.	UNCHANGED
Interior bearing walls / columns / beams — supporting > 1 floor	240 / 120 / 120 / 120 min.	240 / 120 / 120 / 120 min.	UNCHANGED
Floor construction	120 / 90 / 60 / 60 min.	120 / 90 / 60 / 60 min.	UNCHANGED
False ceiling / suspension fixtures	Must be non-combustible.	Same — non-combustible — but additionally must 'provide adequate fire resistance to the ceiling in order to prevent spread of fire across ceiling'.	MODIFIED
Steel beams/columns load-bearing protection threshold	500 m ² covered area triggers requirement (Cl. 3.4.3 NBC).	500 m ² retained — but additional requirement: 'use of appropriate methodology using suitable fire resistance rated materials along with suppression system'.	MODIFIED

6.2 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) — NBC Table 2

REMOVED — Table 2 FAR Limits NBC 2016 Cl. 3.4.4.2 with Table 2 stipulated comparative FAR limits by occupancy and construction type (e.g., Type 1 unlimited; Type 4 educational 0.5). NBCS 2026 Foreword item (t) explicitly states 'Height restrictions of buildings have been eliminated.' The FAR limitation table is removed from Part F. FAR continues to be governed by local development control byelaws (Part 3) — but is no longer dictated by the fire-safety part of the Standard.

6.3 Glazing and Aluminium Composite Panels (Cl. 3.5.9 / 3.5.10)

Aspect	NBC 2016 (Part 4)	NBCS 2026 (Part F)	Change
Glass facade fire resistance	Glass should match fire rating of construction type per Table 1 generally.	Same general rule retained; explicit relaxation for fully sprinklered buildings with fire separation ≥ 9 m: tempered glass in non-combustible assembly + sprinklers within 600 mm of facade.	MODIFIED
Spandrel panel for < 9 m fire separation	Not explicitly required.	NEW: where fire separation < 9 m, additional 900 mm spandrel panel of 1 h fire resistance required.	ADDED
Slab-to-facade gap sealing	General fire-stop guidance.	Explicit: 'All gaps between floor-slabs and facade assembly should be sealed at all levels by approved fire resistant sealant material of equal fire rating as that of floor slab'.	MODIFIED