



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Office of Construction &  
Facilities Management

Office of Facilities Planning  
Facilities Standards Service

# STANDARDS ALERT

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## Standardization of Square Footage Space Definitions and Measurements for VA Facilities

**ISSUE:** VA needs to standardize square footage definitions and measurements used in facilities to adequately manage and track VA's real property portfolio.

**BACKGROUND:** Over the years, square footage definitions and measurements used in VA facilities have not remained consistent or were inadequately described. This condition has caused confusion and mistakes, subsequently degrading the reliability and usefulness of information about what VA owns.

**NEW STANDARD:** THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENTS SHALL BE USED FOR VA FACILITIES:

**Net Square Footage (NSF)** is the area of an individual room/space that is available for use by personnel, furnishings, and equipment. NSF for each room or space is measured from the inside finished surface of surrounding permanent walls, excluding the area bounded by the outside finished surfaces of structural columns and shafts.

**Department Gross Square Feet (DGSF)** used for **VA owned** facilities, is a measurement of an assemblage of rooms and spaces as assigned to a department or service (generally defined by the appropriate VA Space Planning Criteria Chapter) and includes internal departmental or service circulation and walls, columns and projections enclosing the structural elements of the building within the space. The boundary defining DGSF is drawn from the inside finish of the permanent exterior building walls to the room side finish of building common areas or the centerline of department-separating wall partitions. The following building common areas, including the area of the enclosing walls, are not included in DGSF:

- Areas required to support the entire building but are not assigned to a tenant, service, or department
- Building equipment, support areas, and housekeeping closets supporting more than one department or service
- Public restrooms and lounges not contained in a VA Space Planning Criteria Chapter

- Public corridors and entrance lobbies (with the exception of Lobby spaces normally assigned to Space Planning Criteria Chapter 244)
- Vertical circulation (elevators, escalators, and stair)
- Shafts, risers, and stacks

**Net Usable Square Footage (NUSF)** used for **VA leases** is that portion of rentable space that is available for a tenant's personnel, furnishings, and equipment, and includes the floor area of full-height columns and projections enclosing the structural elements of the building within the space. Net usable space is the area for which VA will pay a square foot rate. It is determined as follows:

If the space is on a single tenancy floor, compute the inside area by measuring between the inside finish of the permanent exterior building walls or from the face of the convectors (pipes or other wall-hung fixtures) if the convector occupies at least 50% of the length of exterior walls.

If the space is on a multiple tenancy floor, measure from the exterior building walls as above and to the room side finish of the fixed shared public corridor and shaft walls and/or the centerline of tenant-separating fixed wall partitions.

Deduct the following from the inside gross area, including the enclosing walls, to arrive at the figure for net usable square feet:

- Housekeeping closets not contained in programmed areas
- Public restrooms and lounges
- Building equipment and service areas
- Public corridors and entrance lobbies
- Vertical circulation (elevators, escalators, and stairs)
- Shafts, risers, and stacks

**Gross Square Feet (GSF)** is defined as the area that includes all enclosed space as measured from the exterior face of the building walls.

**Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF)** is the sum of the GSF on each floor of the building.

**Interstitial Space should not be included in net, departmental net/gross, building gross area measurements or calculations.**

**Capital Asset Inventory (CAI) Common Space** for a floor is calculated by adding all of the Department areas in DGSF on the floor and then subtracting that total from the floor's GSF area. (This CAI methodology differs significantly from the definition of "Common Area" used for leasing. The CAI Common Space area includes exterior walls and other building elements that are not a part of the leasing definition of Common Area.)

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