

Handbook Highlight from the Montana Municipal Officials Handbook

Municipal Classification

Municipal Classification (July 2010)

Classification	Population	Number
First Class	10,000 or more	7
Second Class	5,000 to 9,999	3
Third Class	1,000 to 4,999	40
Town	Less than 1,000	77
TOTAL		127

Note: Does not include the two consolidated governments of Anaconda-Deer Lodge and Butte-Silver Bow.

1.203 When and How to Change Classification

Unless a city or town undertakes its own direct enumeration of inhabitants, the basis for classifying Montana municipalities is the most recent federal decennial census. Whenever the federal census indicates that the population of a municipality has increased or decreased sufficiently to alter its classification, the city or town council must, by resolution, change the classification to conform to the classes established by [7-1-4111](#), MCA, as noted above. A certified copy of the resolution must be filed with the county clerk and recorder and with the Secretary of State's office in Helena. However, there are exceptions set forth at [7-1-4112](#), MCA.

Exception # 1: A city with a population of more than 9,000 and less than 10,000 may, by resolution of the city council pursuant to [7-1-4114](#) through [7-1-4118](#), be either a city or town. (MCA 2011)

Exception # 2: A city with a population of more than 5,000 but less than 7,500

may, by resolution of the city council, be a second-class city or a third-class city.

Exception #3: A city or town with a population of more than 1,000 but less than 2,500 may, by resolution of the city or town council, be a town or a third-class city.

The significance of these exceptions are:

- The elected and appointed municipal officers are somewhat different for each classification (See [7-4-4101](#) through [4103](#), MCA);
- The requirements for a municipal fire department are different for towns and third-class cities than for other classifications (See [7-33-4101](#), MCA);
- In a town or third class city, the council may designate a justice of the peace or the city judge of another city or town to act as city judge (See [3-11-205](#), MCA);
- If a city of the third class adopts a commission manager form of government, it may continue to appoint its judge under an ordinance passed pursuant to [7-4-4102](#), MCA and 45 A.G. Op. 15 (1993).