



# **Code Enforcement Manual for Fire Inspections for the Central Stickney Fire Department**

## **POLICY DESCRIPTION: OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to provide a general overview of the fire inspection program for B&F Construction Code Services. This document may be supplemented with additional policies and procedures at any time. This policy contains information the fire inspector should be aware of regarding general policies of the company and specific policies of the client which will be addressed at the end of this document.

### **Overall Philosophy:**

Fire inspectors use various techniques to assure compliance with local laws relating to building hazards, health and safety concerns, property maintenance standards, and other land use laws and regulations. **Our goal is to obtain voluntary compliance from business owners and the business community.** Each case may be unique and a “one size fits all” solution doesn’t always work.

Several studies have shown that a good compliance program promotes increased land values, safer neighborhoods, and pride in ownership. **Education of the public regarding applicable laws can be an effective tool in obtaining immediate compliance, and a long-range solution to ongoing nuisances.** Efficient code compliance is best accomplished by direct communication with members of the community.

Fire inspectors must maintain ethical standards and strive to be firm, fair, and friendly. The fire inspector’s goal is to serve the community, safeguard lives and property and to respect the constitutional rights of all of the members of the community. Fire inspectors strive to achieve a number of objectives. They work for the common goals of their profession and employer. They conduct themselves as a model for the community in which they work, are accountable and accept professional and personal responsibility. They make decisions free from prejudice, honor the spirit and letter of the law, and safeguard public confidence by conducting themselves in a manner that maintains public trust.

The Company is committed to providing the best service possible to our clients and to maintain the quality of life in the communities that retain our services through obtaining compliance in enforcing regulations and codes. The fire inspector shall uniformly and fairly enforce codes and regulations and shall assign high priority to the abatement of violations that may constitute potential threats to public health or safety or that may cause significant environmental damage.

### **Realize that you are a part of the system.**

Whether you recognize the fact or not, as a fire prevention inspector you are now a part of a code enforcement system. This system has evolved over the years into a powerful mechanism which, when used correctly, greatly benefits the communities we serve.

A good code enforcement system tries to accomplish a range of objectives by

- Reducing risks of hazards;
- Providing improved fire-safe structures;
- Reducing fire exposure when a fire does occur;
- Minimizing fire deaths and injuries;
- Controlling inherent hazards that cannot be eliminated;

Minimizing fire insurance costs;  
Balancing the cost of fire protection between public and private sectors.

For effective code enforcement, knowledge of the physical structures in the communities in which we work is necessary. In today's complex society, an inspector needs to be very sensitive to many interrelated and often conflicting values that permeate the community.

The fire inspector provides an invaluable service to the community. The most effective inspectors possess a number of traits that set them apart from the rest. These traits include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a strong commitment to good public relations;
- a positive attitude;
- a customer-service orientation;
- professional appearance, image, demeanor;
- a desire to make educating customers an essential part of the code enforcement process;
- salesmanship;
- a thorough knowledge of the codes one is enforcing; and
- a thorough knowledge of how to conduct an inspection.

### **A Strong Commitment to Good Public Relations**

How the inspector comes across during an inspection is essential to the success of the inspection. Being tough because you have the law on your side does not work in this day and age. Being courteous, polite, and even friendly will go a long way toward a successful inspection. If an inspector is curt, overly business like, and unfriendly it will have a similar effect on the representative of the occupancy being inspected.

From a public relations standpoint, it is essential that the inspector explain the legal reasons for the inspection and the value (fire and life safety) of compliance. Assure the company representative that every effort will be made to address only those situations that must be dealt with, and that compliance now could result in greater savings in the future through the prevention of a fire and possible injury or loss of life.

### **A Positive Attitude**

An inspector who approaches an inspection with a positive attitude is one step closer to success. None of us likes to deal with negative individuals. Likewise, someone experiencing a fire safety inspection (who already may view this as a negative experience) doesn't want someone with a negative attitude pointing out all the problems in the occupancy.

An inspector who comes across as positive (not arrogant) and confident and who expresses a sincere desire to help bring the occupancy into fire- safe compliance will most likely end up with both a safer occupancy and a satisfied customer.

## **A Customer-Service Orientation**

When we conduct an inspection the people we deal with are our customers. By treating people as our customers, and in the manner we would like to be treated, we are establishing this customer-service orientation. Remember, on the inspections you perform, these are tax-paying customers you are dealing with. Treat them as customers and you probably will get a great deal of cooperation, and end up with a successful inspection with timely compliance.

## **Professionalism**

The inspector's image is one of the most important aspects of the fire inspection. People still "judge a book by its cover." The public, the property owner, and your peers all will form a first impression, greatly influenced by your "cover. Your image reflects not only on you, but also others in the company. Take pride in the image you present.

As you speak, others hear and judge. The fire inspector must be capable of public speaking. The ability to carry on a smooth and easy flowing conversation is vital to inspection success. The inspector is a salesperson trying to sell fire prevention and fire safety. The ability to speak well to convince owners that these recommendations for fire safety are in their best interest is an important skill. Property owners need to be "sold." If they reject these ideas, then obviously they have not been sold. While trying to sell, the inspector does not need to be pushy. You should give the impression of wanting to work with the property owner to establish the **best** fire safety levels **possible**.

The spoken word leaves an impression. Because of this the inspector needs to be well versed in the code. The ability to say, "I do not know, but will get the answer," is also a desirable part of the vocabulary of an inspector. Do not be embarrassed because you do not know. There are many resources to seek for the answers, and you can find them and report back. No one knows all the answers.

Consider the impression you make during a telephone conversation and in face-to-face interaction. Speak out, be sharp, clear, and firm. Do not slur your speech or mumble. Know what you are going to say and say it with confidence. Your speech has four essential fundamentals: enthusiasm, confidence, preparation, and presentation. Each relies on the others for the favorable impression.

## **Education as an Enforcement Tool**

Have you ever asked "why" when someone in authority has told you to do something and you do not know the "why?" How do you think your customer feels when you point out a fire safety violation but you do not explain "why" it is a violation?

By taking a little more time to explain the reasons why a violation is a violation, you are educating your customers and, it is hoped, eliminating future similar violations. Time and again inspectors have reported a customer comment of "I didn't know that," or "now I understand," when the rationale of a violation was clearly explained.

Educated customers will talk to other potential customers who in turn may take corrective action before being told to. The more information we inspectors can communicate, the better job we can do and the more effective we can be. Code enforcement is really code

education. Enforcement should come into play only when we cannot get willing compliance through education and cooperation.

## **Salesmanship**

The ability to sell fire prevention and fire safety is a fundamental part of the inspector's job. Essential to the success of selling is believing in what you are selling and communicating this believability. If you don't believe it, neither will your customers.

The ability to sell is directly related to your knowledge of the product or end result you want to achieve. Being prepared by knowing the hazards common to the occupancy you are inspecting, and communicating them to your customer is a major part of this selling effort. Through your preparation and knowledge, you can sell the owner on what the violation is, the hazard it presents to the safety of the building and the occupants, why it must be corrected, and how this can be accomplished. This influences the way the inspector is selling the product, a fire-safe occupancy.

## **Ethics and the Fire Inspector**

Ethics is the code of morals of a particular person. Ethics includes many things that affect how one views and deals with the world. Values like honesty, justice, fairness, courtesy, respect for life, to name just a few, all relate to ethics. Most professions have a code of ethics--a right way to function. Fire prevention is no different.

One of the underlying purposes of codes is to see that general fire safety is observed. These laws have established correct procedures and proper rules of conduct. If an individual's rights are not respected to the fullest extent of the law, then the code can be declared null and void. When we develop the inspection program, we must include the traits of leadership: honest motives, correct attitudes, and practical wisdom. Deep down, we need principles to guide us during the discharge of our duties. We must maintain our integrity and discharge our duties with fairness and impartiality at all times.

Fire inspectors must carry out their duties honestly and fairly and not allow illegal or immoral influences to alter the decision making process. All persons who take on fire inspection duties have, in essence, agreed to carry out their assigned duties within the framework of the codes or laws they are charged with enforcing and to do so to the very best of their ability. If all inspectors keep this in mind as they perform their tasks the question of unethical conduct cannot be raised.

## **CONDUCTING A SYSTEMATIC INSPECTION**

It is extremely important to understand that an inspector, can become proficient only through extensive training and experience. Time alone is not a teacher. To become an outstanding inspector, it is imperative that you study your profession, use each experience as a learning tool, and build on those experiences.

## **Preparation for the Inspection**

Preparation for an inspection is almost as important as the inspection itself. A well-prepared inspector will be able to conduct a thorough, efficient, and technically correct inspection.

Preparation minimizes the time it takes to conduct an inspection and shortens the time the customers must devote to the process--allowing them to get back to other important responsibilities.

## **Scheduling inspections.**

Plan far enough in advance to make it convenient. Once you know what is to be inspected, review the complete inspection history of the occupancy. A look at previous years' inspections will tell you a great deal about problems encountered in the past, how they have been corrected, and how quickly the corrections were made. If you see a trend of numerous reinspections or very slow compliance you can develop positive strategies for reversing this trend. It is also helpful to look at building plans, if available, to check the construction type, exiting requirements, and the approved occupancy use of the building.

An invaluable resource to anyone conducting inspections is the history of the building or occupancy. Inspection files provide valuable reference materials that tell you what has been observed by previous inspectors. These files always should be available. If not, then develop accurate files and maintain files on all occupancies inspected.

A review of the applicable codes will help when conducting the inspection. Many inspectors have developed quick reference checklists based on occupancy type to use during an inspection. This ready reference highlights the most important codes that must be enforced in a particular occupancy and serves as a reminder to the inspector of what to look for.

Once the code research is completed it is time to get ready for the inspection. You will need some important equipment to do the job right. This may include some or all of the following:

- clipboard and inspection forms;
- graph and note paper, ruler, measuring tape, and measuring wheel;
- pens, pencils, or colored markers;
- hard hat, coveralls, safety shoes, safety glasses or goggles, earplugs;
- flashlight;
- camera;
- reference books, codes;
- a list of hazards common to this type of occupancy; and
- personal identification

## **Conducting the Inspection**

You should arrive at the inspection site a few minutes ahead of schedule. This will allow you to survey the exterior of the building and help you become familiar with the overall area to be inspected.

A few of the things to look for during this survey include the following:

- emergency equipment access;
- building or business address, location, and visibility;
- potential hazardous situations, including blocked exits, unsafe storage of combustibles near the building or close to exterior openings or exits, and combustible storage under exterior stairways;
- construction type;
- location and position (open or closed) of post indicator valves(PIV); and
- location and condition of sprinkler and standpipe connections.

Take notes of what hazards you observe so you can review them with the customer. Include them in your report.

## **Entry Interview**

Now it is time to meet your customer and begin the inspection. Often this is called the "entry interview" because it allows you and your customer to ask each other questions pertaining to the inspection. You may already have answered some when you called ahead to schedule the inspection. It is critical that you approach this part of your work in a positive, proactive way. Introduce yourself and show proper identification so the customer knows who you are. Explain that this is a fire safety inspection and that it will benefit everyone by ensuring that this business or occupancy complies with local codes. State that one of the major goals of the inspection is a safer building for occupants, visitors, or customers and that it will reduce or minimize the risk of a fire.

Explain that you are there to help, to answer any questions, to research the answer if you do not know, to explain each violation clearly, and to offer methods or procedures to correct them. Also explain that you will develop and give them a report on the inspection after it is completed.

Ask if there are any questions. Then begin the inspection.

## **Systematic Walkthrough**

As you begin the inspection the most important thing to remember is to inspect all areas of each floor. Systematically proceed to each floor, working from the bottom up or the top down. Having an established system for inspecting so that you do not miss floor areas is the key to the systematic system. Every room, closet, and concealed area should be checked for fire hazards. Any areas that are locked should be unlocked and checked. The building representative can assist you with these needs.

While conducting the inspection, record your observations and note anything you need to research later in the code. Some broad categories you will need to attend to as you inspect are as follows. This is only a guide and not a complete list.

### Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is plain common sense. You do not need intense training to recognize, almost intuitively, whether or not the housekeeping on the premises is satisfactory.

**Cleanliness and orderliness are basic to good fire safety.** If you feel uneasy about the quality of the housekeeping or the general care and management of the property, then pay more attention to hazards management in the facility. Cleanliness is a good tip-off.

Good housekeeping practices--both indoors and outdoors--are needed to control the presence of unwanted fuels, obstructions, and sources of ignition. Certain aspects of housekeeping are a common denominator to most properties whatever their use; others are peculiar to a particular occupancy. It is neither practical nor possible to describe every feature of housekeeping for all occupancies; the alert inspector will visualize hazardous housekeeping situations peculiar to the occupancy being inspected and be prepared to offer recommendations to eliminate them.

### Exit Maintenance

An inspector always should note how to exit any area of a building being inspected. If you cannot see a way out or easily find an exit, maybe the occupants of the building will not be able to, either.

In most cases exits are marked by lighted exit signs. It is important to check all (illuminated) exit signs to make sure they are working. Next, check to make sure the exit path is clear and unobstructed. Too often storage, trash, tables, or other obstructions line the exit path or are placed in front of or on the other side of an exit door. Here again, some common sense can be used to determine if a violation exists. If the inspector cannot get out, no one else can. Also, check emergency lighting to make certain it is operating.

Check doors and locking devices. Depending on the occupancy, different types of locking devices are allowed or disallowed. Be familiar with the requirements for the occupancy being inspected. If there is panic hardware but it is chained, it is pretty obvious there is a problem. If there is a keyed deadbolt or chain lock on the door, there is very likely a problem.

### Storage--Piled Stock

Problems with storage can go from the very simple to the very complex. The degree of fire hazard found within storage occupancies is governed primarily by the commodities (products) being stored and the storage arrangements employed. Together with the height and construction of the storage building these considerations or factors determine the level of fire protection required.

### Detection and Suppression Equipment

While conducting an inspection you must look at all fire detection and suppression equipment. Sprinkler system control valves must be in the open position and chained if not monitored. If not, the system most likely is not operational. Sprinkler and standpipe connections must be clear and free of obstructions. The threads on these connections must be inspected to make sure they are not damaged. Look to make sure paper, bottles, or other debris have not been pushed into these openings. This would cause an obstruction.

Smoke detectors must be kept clean. A visual inspection will give you a good idea if they are working properly. Most detectors have a permanent or intermittent flashing light that tells you if the detector has power and is working.

Make sure that fire sprinkler heads are clean, not painted, and are free of obstructions. If the water cannot reach the area the sprinkler is designed to serve due to storage (boxes, bookshelves, etc.) being too close to the sprinkler heads, it will not put out a fire once it starts. Plants, decorations, and other hangings should not be placed on or near sprinkler heads.

**It is not the inspector's responsibility to conduct tests of fire protection systems. These tests should be conducted by qualified or certified individuals trained to perform them. As an inspector you may observe and validate these tests, or receive documentation that the tests have been conducted and what the results were.**

An inspector should never open or close valves, activate alarms, or perform other test functions.

### Janitorial, Electrical, and Elevator Room Storage

Out of sight, out of mind seems to be the theory used by people who store any number of potential fire hazards in janitorial, electrical, or elevator rooms. Trash, flammable liquids, combustibles such as boxes and cardboard, and other hazards commonly end up in these rooms.

If they are neatly stored and in appropriate containers, this storage may not be a problem. But if you find open containers or debris spread about or stored close to electrical panels or water heaters, there is probably a code violation.

Most people do not think of these areas as being hazardous so when they say "it's only a janitorial room" and want to pass it by, do not agree. Insist that you look these areas over closely to ensure that there are no inherent hazards.

### General Inspection Concerns

In addition to these broad areas of concern, there are other hazards or potential hazards the inspector must look for. Although not all-inclusive, the following sections will give you

some basic ideas on what else to look for during an inspection.

### **Ashes and Sawdust**

Emphasize the safe handling and disposal of ashes. Only approved containers should be used in a facility. Once these containers are emptied into an outside container, it is critical to check the ashes and, if necessary, water them down. This should give the greatest margin of safety. Remember, you are selling fire prevention. Explain how fires can be caused by unthinking acts.

Treat large amounts of sawdust to be discarded with respect. Store sawdust only in approved containers that are properly vented. Special emphasis here should be placed on the inspection of commercial and industrial properties. Sawdust that accumulates around or is produced by machinery should be swept on a regular basis. Sources of ignition in the area should be identified and controlled. Also, some areas may be using sawdust to absorb some type of leakage or waste from a particular process. Carefully observe what could be mixed in the sawdust and properly advise the owner how best to handle the situation.

### **Packing Materials**

The quantity and type of packing materials stored in buildings should be of concern to the fire prevention inspector. Stress prohibiting smoking in areas where combustibles or flammable materials are stored. Observation of ignition sources, such as open flames, temporary wiring, overloaded extension wires, etc., needs to be second nature to the inspector; look hard, think how a fire could start in any given area. Another important point to consider with packing materials is not only the fact that they will burn, but that gases will be given off when they burn. Point this out to the owner and note in the report the types of packing material stored and used.

### **Old Furniture and Paper**

You will often find old furniture and paper in remote storage areas, especially in institutions, educational facilities, and office buildings. Old papers and furniture should be discarded unless they are being kept for future use. If this is the case, they should be stored properly. It is the responsibility of the inspector to assist the owner in identifying a safe method to do so.

### **Cleaning Products**

Cleaning products need to be stored and used properly. Some of these products can ignite spontaneously and will burn easily. Flammable cleaning products should be kept in an approved cabinet away from sources of ignition. In the interest of fire prevention, talk with the owner to be sure such materials are used properly and that no product is being used in an unsafe or unhealthy manner. The old saying, "When all else fails, read the instructions," can very easily apply here. Read the instructions first to help prevent a possible disaster.

## **Waste Cans and Spontaneous Heating**

Certain oily wastes, paints, rags, and wiping and polishing cloths can ignite spontaneously. If the heat cannot escape, the material may ignite. The solution is to store oily rags in U/L listed closed metal (safety) containers and remove the material from the building as soon as possible. Paints and other flammable and combustible liquids are to be stored in U/L listed cabinets. Oily wastes should be stored outside in a safe place until they are removed from the immediate area.

## **Interior Finishes**

Some of the key points in life safety are smoke generation, fuel contribution, and flame spread of the interior finish. Remember to observe the walls, floors, and ceilings for their finishes, coverings, decorations, curtains, etc., in all occupancies. These are usually controlled during building design by the codes; however, people rearrange or renovate after occupancy. These renovations may or may not create new code problems. The wood paneling, the paint, the wall covering, the carpet, and the ceiling tiles all can contribute to fire and life safety problems.

## **Common Hazards by Occupancy**

Another way to attack the problem is to look at typical occupancies and list the most common hazards found in each. This method will help you generate a list of areas or items to inspect.

The following are hazards peculiar to different occupancies, and ones that may frequently be violated.

- Multi-unit residences.
  - Blocked exits.
  - Unserved or missing fire extinguishers.
  - Excessive storage in basement.
  - Clutter in attic, garage, under stairs, heating room.
  - Exit signs lacking or not visible.
  - Emergency lighting not functional.
  - Accumulation of dust and lint in laundry room.
  - Combustibles next to water heater.
  - Faulty fire escapes or escapes blocked at ground level.
  - Faulty, untested standpipes or fire hoses.
  - Penetrations in fire separations.
  - Incomplete or missing evacuation plans.
  - Stairway doors blocked open.
- Assembly occupancies.
  - Blocked exits (constant problem).
  - No exit signs; exit lights out.
  - Emergency lighting.
  - Doors locked during hours of occupancy.
  - Extinguishers not serviced or nonexistent.

- Overcrowding, no occupant load sign.
- Aisles not adequate.
- Candles on tables in unsafe holders.
- Extension cords and other electrical problems.
- Decorations (combustible or flammable type).
- Non-flame-retardant drapes.
- Heating hazards.
  
- Restaurants.
  - Grease accumulation on filters and in ducts.
  - Hood system not serviced, nonexistent, or improperly installed.
  - Exiting problems, the same as assembly.
  - Decoration problems the same as assembly.
  - Cluttered storeroom.
  - Electrical hazards.
  - Heating hazards.
  - Extension cords.
  - Exit signage.
  - Emergency lighting.
  
- Warehouses.
  - Fire protection equipment not in service.
  - Overhead doors obstructed by stock.
  - Exits obstructed.
  - Electrical machinery hazards.
  - Extension cords.
  - Flammable liquid storage.
  - Oily rags, etc.
  - Trash and debris.
  - Poor storage practices.
  - Stock obstructing sprinklers.
  - Fire separations violated.
  - Propane- or gasoline-operated lift trucks.
  - Separation and isolation of hazardous materials.
  - Exit signage.
  - Emergency lighting.
  
- Hospitals.
  - Fire protection equipment not in service.
  - Extension cords.
  - Cafeteria hazards.
  - Exits locked and blocked.
  - Fire separations and doors blocked open.
  - Excessive storage of combustibles.
  - Emergency generator not tested.
  - Sterilizer room cluttered with combustibles.
  - Improper storage of gases.
  - Improper storage, handling, and use of anesthetics.
  - Combustibles next to heating.

- Lack of proper maintenance of heating equipment.
  - Evacuation plan outdated, inadequate, or not posted.
  - Emergency lighting.
  - Exit signage.
- Office buildings.
  - Exiting problems.
  - Extension cords.
  - Extinguishers not serviced or missing.
  - Poor records storage.
  - Wastepaper handling.
  - Lack of proper maintenance and testing of fire protection systems.
  - Exit signs and emergency lighting.
- Manufacturing.
  - Electrical machinery.
  - Misuse of extension cords.
  - Improper use and storage of flammable liquids.
  - Faulty use and storage of chemicals.
  - Improper use and storage of gases.
  - Blocked and obstructed exterior doors, fire doors, etc.
  - Improper storage of fire protection equipment.
  - Improper maintenance of fire separations.
  - Cluttered storerooms.
  - Inadequate aisles and exits.
  - Cluttered storage of business records.
  - Heating equipment problems.
  - Combustibles too close to heating equipment.
  - Spontaneous ignition.
  - Paint spraying operations.
  - Dip tanks with faulty lids, etc.
  - Paint and chemical storage.
  - Inherently hazardous processes.
  - Sparks from welding.
  - Exit signage, emergency lighting
  - Inadequate exhausting of vapors, dust, etc.
  - Disposal of trash, sawdust, fires, debris.
- Schools.
  - Blocked exits.
  - Chained exits.
  - Exit lights not functioning.
  - Fire protection equipment not maintained.
  - Unsafe chemistry lab (storage and equipment).
  - Flammable liquids such as solvents, paints, cleaners, and duplicating fluids stored in offices, shops, and classrooms.
  - Shop hazards same as "manufacturing."
  - Excessive storage.
  - Non-flame-retardant drapes in auditorium.
  - Extension cords.

- Combustibles near heating equipment.
- Improper, older electrical equipment.
- Chlorine and acid storage for pool.
- Hazards caused by lab experiments.
- Spray painting in shops and illegal/unapproved booths.
- Dip tanks.
- Welding hazards.

Take your time during the inspection and be observant. Ask to see all areas of the occupancy. Be methodical and accurate. You do not want to miss any vital details or facts.

If a situation does not look right, check into it to determine its safety. Common sense and good judgment must be used in inspecting existing occupancies. Use the code as a guide. Remember that the purpose of the inspection is to enforce code compliance and leave the place safer than when you first entered it. Report all violations in writing and keep file copies. When identifying a hazard, also identify ways of correcting it according to code.

Some hazards must be corrected immediately. Others can be corrected within a prescribed timeframe.

### **Completing the Inspection**

After you have completed the inspection and before leaving the premises it is important to conduct an exit interview with the customer. Here you want to review the purpose of the inspection--a fire- and occupant-safe building that meets the requirements of local codes. Reemphasize your desire to work with the owner to gain compliance.

Review with the customer those violations that have been immediately identified and can be corrected in the near future. Let the owner know that you will research and evaluate other potential violations and that you will schedule a meeting in the next few days to review the final inspection report.

At this point you should answer any questions the customer may have. For those you cannot answer right away, make notes; assure the customer that you will research the question and get answers right away. Be sure to thank the customer for cooperating.

### **AFTER THE INSPECTION**

Review your notes and floor sketches, research the applicable codes, and determine what corrective measures will bring the occupancy into fire and life-safety compliance. Base all your recommendations on the code.

Determine what potential violations to refer to another agency. If you feel there are major electrical hazards to be corrected it may be appropriate to refer these to the jurisdiction's electrical inspection division. If you observed potential health problems (e.g., grease and dirt in kitchen vent systems, or cockroaches or rats in a restaurant) document and refer this information to local building official for additional action. As an inspector you have an obligation to take action on obvious health and safety violations even if they do not come under your authority.

Do not overlook or ignore these situations; remember your job is fire and life safety, but even more importantly, it is **service** to the people of the community.

Develop your final inspection report Provide the customer a copy of the inspection report and, if necessary, walk through the building and discuss where the violations are, why they are violations, and what corrective measures must be taken. Make sure the customer knows that action must be taken as soon as possible, and that fire safety violations cannot be put off for future correction.

There are times when it may be necessary to inform the local building/fire official of actions that may need immediate attention. Some examples may be

- If a life hazard exists: nursing home, day-care center.
- If there is a large target hazard: warehouse district with mixed storage that is unsafe.
- If there are multiple-hazard processes: hazardous materials storage and refineries.
- If suspicious conditions exist: addition to the interior of a building without modification to the sprinkler system.
- If conflicting conditions occur: retroactive code requirements.
- If the owner or occupant is uncooperative.
- If you anticipate legal action.
- If you have reached a specific agreement with the owner.

## Writing a Report

If you need to write a formal report in addition to your inspection report keep the following in mind:

The first step in writing a report is taking good field notes. Do this with an inspection form or a simple note pad. You must take notes as the inspection progresses; otherwise it will later be hard to recall some aspects of the inspection. These notes should be made as the information is obtained. One of the basic rules of note taking is that the information be clear and complete. A good point to remember is "When in doubt, write it down."

File these notes or field inspection forms. Provide a backup if anything should happen to the report. This not only can aid you with the report, but also can assist in refreshing memory of a particular inspection. The report should contain general information, specific information, and recommendations. The recommendations must indicate what needs to be done (code section reference), and they must be specific and clear.

Avoid some common errors in report writing. These include the use of personal pronouns. **I, we, me, and our** should not be used, as they reflect a personal opinion. Terms such as "recommended by" and "according to the code" should be used.

Omit general statements. Use only clear, complete, and precise statements. Once these statements are made they should be addressed with the appropriate code references. Use only correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. The report needs to project a

professional tone. This report should be written on a level that the reader will understand. Remember, the reader is neither an engineer nor an inspector, nor experienced in the language of the code or technical writing. Write so that the customer can understand it.

The following is an outline for writing an inspection report. With careful planning and preparation, the inspector will be able to complete the inspection report accurately and easily.

1. Date of inspection.
2. Location of property relative to other streets and buildings.
3. Name, address, and telephone number of people to be notified in case of fire.
4. Class of the occupancy.
5. Storage of raw or finished stock and steps for processing.
6. Life hazard--day and night, exit facility, etc.
7. Common hazards: power plant, heat plant, and housekeeping conditions.
8. Fire protection equipment by type, size, number, location, and condition.
9. A general summary of other conditions found, such as information for fire department use; for prevention activities in which occupants participate; and information of special interest.
10. Name of the fire inspector.

## **Reinspections**

Set a reinspection date (this is not a compliance date) that meets the customer's schedule. Make sure the customer knows how to contact you, if necessary. A day or two before the reinspection, call to verify the date and time. Then arrive as scheduled, ready to complete a timely and efficient reinspection.

If all violations have not been corrected discuss the delay with the customer. If the situation is beyond the customer's control, schedule a second reinspection date, and emphasize that violations must be corrected at that time. If it appears that the owner is being uncooperative or is resisting compliance, state that you may have to refer the inspection to a higher authority for action or that citations may be issued. This action will depend on the procedures established by the jurisdiction.

Be positive and courteous, but firm, in letting a customer know that compliance is beneficial to the business, its customers, employees, and visitors, and that it is the law. Again reinforce the value to fire and life safety that a code-complying building offers, and that you are ready to help in any way possible to make this happen.

Fire inspectors prioritize the identification and abatement of code violations affecting the health and safety of residents, business owners, and the public. It is critical the abatement of violations that cause or have the potential to cause a threat to life safety or environmental harm be prioritized. Nuisances and other violations that do not have an immediate potential for harm to people and/or the environment will be a lower priority.

**Fire inspectors must realize they are an integral part of the code enforcement process. The following policy is used for code enforcement and may be applied to certain cases involving the fire inspection process.**

## **CASE MANAGEMENT**

### **Purpose:**

To ensure quality service, standardize information and facilitate the preservation of accurate records for all compliance activities; and to continue operation of a system of code compliance that is both effective and fair.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Procedures will be established to provide for consistent collection and factual analysis of information relating to fire inspections. Detailed records will be maintained and organized and should always be prepared for a potential court appearance. The following is a guideline to assist in the complaint handling process. Changes may occur based on individual cases and circumstances, as reasonably determined. The reason for any change or expedited process shall be documented and described in the file.

## **Performance Measures**

### **Purpose:**

To have a uniform timeframe in which code compliance complaints are investigated.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

In order to measure efficiency, performance measures have been developed based upon the percentage of cases resolved and how much time it takes to perform an initial response from the date the complaint is logged. Cases are prioritized in the following manner:

**High Priority** – Safety related complaints (such as building without a permit, unsafe structures, and sub-standard conditions) with a goal of 2 working days for initial response.

**Medium Priority** - Non-Safety related complaints (Zoning, other) with a goal of 3 working days for initial response.

## **Records Organization and Electronic File Naming**

### **Purpose:**

To have a standardized method for organizing the code compliance case files in the computer filing system.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Currently many files are organized by municipality then by address. This method shall continue and all existing electronic files shall be converted to this method. All files shall be saved to the appropriate folder under the appropriate municipality folder name.

## **Complaints**

### **Purpose:**

To provide guidance how to respond to complaints received.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Complaints from the public are received by the municipality.

There are two methods of achieving the goal of voluntary compliance and enforcement of all applicable laws, codes, standards and regulations. The methods are (1) reactive, such as responding to complaints and issuing citations; and (2) proactive, such as notifying interested parties of problems on the property and investigating independently observed violations.

**Complainant identity shall be considered confidential information not subject to disclosure.** Code enforcement officers shall not release the name of any complaining person or witness. If the person is insistent about receiving this information they should be referred to the municipality.

Allegations of violations from anonymous persons (which include both those persons who fail to provide contact information as well as those who provide contact information but ask to remain anonymous) should be treated equally. If an investigation occurs, and no violation can be independently determined the case may be closed.

## **Initial Steps, Investigation, and Informal Efforts to Obtain Voluntary Compliance and Correction of Violations**

### **Purpose:**

To provide a consistent process for obtaining voluntary compliance.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Once a complaint is received the code enforcement officer shall initiate an investigation and conduct research to determine if a violation(s) exists. Besides a site visit/inspection, research may include internet searches.

1. If during the investigation of a complaint it is unclear if a violation exists, Code Enforcement Officers/Property Maintenance Inspectors may make contact with the owner of the property and/or other person(s) to gather additional information/evidence. A phone conversation may clear the property owner/tenant of any wrongdoing or may give clarity of the facts of a potential violation. If communication by phone proves not to be feasible and an initial drive-by site inspection does not gather the needed facts, then contact shall be made by mail.

2. In all cases in which a violation exists, the code enforcement officer shall provide the owner(s) and/or any other person(s) responsible for violations with a Notice of Violation and Order to Abate Condition with a description of the apparent code violation and the remedies and courses of action that may be pursued for correction. All forms should be maintained in electronic

form in the appropriate location.

3. If voluntary compliance is agreed upon, Code Enforcement Officers shall confirm in writing with the property owner/person responsible as to the required compliance course of action. Officers should allow a reasonable amount of time and opportunity for correction of the violations before the formal enforcement steps as outlined by the municipality or the Officer's discretion. While the amount of time allowed for compliance may vary depending on the circumstances, those circumstances should be well-documented in writing to justify the period of time allowed for compliance or cure.

## **Requests for Extension**

### **Purpose:**

To provide procedures for uniformly handling case files to provide consistent treatment of citizens related to extension requests.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Any request for an extension of time to bring the property into compliance shall be by the property owner or responsible party. If the proposal is mutually agreed at the discretion of the Officer, the owner/responsible party shall submit in writing to the Code Enforcement Officer that they agree to the existence of the violation and the date for compliance which was mutually agreed upon.

The Code Enforcement Officer shall subsequently mail a letter or reply via email to the property owner/ responsible party confirming the extension and advising them of the new compliance date. The complainant shall be contacted and updated on the case status.

Extensions may be granted for a reasonable period of time depending on the circumstances, the stated reasons for the extension, and the nature of the violation. As with other specified deadlines, the circumstances and reasoning for the length of the extension shall be well documented in the file. The extension will be granted for no more than 30 calendar days unless circumstances clearly warrant a longer extension. In no event should the deadline for compliance be extended for more than 90 calendar days. Authorization for any extension longer than 30 calendar days must be obtained from the Supervisor.

## **Scope of Inspection and Expectation of Privacy**

### **Purpose:**

To provide general guidelines for entry onto private property in the course of investigating reported or observed violations. The Company recognizes that entry onto private property for enforcement purposes is governed by State law, constitutional considerations, and other applicable law.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Property owners have a right to privacy and are entitled to be free of illegal searches. If a property owner has erected a 6-foot high or taller solid fence such as a chain link fence with slats, block fence, or wooden fence around the rear yard of the property, the property owner has

a reasonable expectation of privacy. No officer shall use any artificial means to improve their position in an attempt to look over a solid fence to view a violation, such as standing in the bed of a truck or climbing on top of an electrical box, flying an unoccupied aerial vehicle (e.g. drone) or the use of other methods. Officers shall not look through a knothole in a fence to view a violation. The test for reasonable expectation of privacy is, "Would the average person expect that the

condition of the fence around the property would keep the yard private from people looking into the yard?" If the fence becomes dilapidated and wooden slats are missing from the fence, or several strips of chain link fence screening are missing, the property owner no longer has an expectation of privacy.

If the violation can be legally seen from a neighboring property, and that neighboring property owner has consented to the officer's presence, then the owner/resident of the property has no expectation of privacy. If the code enforcement officer has any doubt he/she shall not take any action without first discussing with the supervisor.

## **Consent**

### **Purpose:**

To obtain permission when accessing properties.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Consent for the initial inspection shall be documented in the case narrative, including circumstances surrounding consent, description and name of party giving consent and of consent (verbal, written, inspection requested by occupant, etc.). When responding to a property for apparent code compliance violations, a good rule of thumb is to think of a code enforcement officer as a delivery person. Anywhere a delivery person can go, a code officer can go. This also applies in the reverse; a delivery person would not walk around a residence and deliver a package at the back door. Therefore, in order for an officer to inspect the rear yard of a residence, there must be consent.

If an Officer responds to a residence where there is a fence with a locked gate, the officer shall NOT jump or climb over that fence to get to the front door.

Consent may be given in writing or verbally. Adequate written consent is a note written by the officer stating, "I, [name of homeowner or other individual with legal standing, as described below], hereby allow [name of Officer] to inspect the rear yard at [address of property being investigated]." The property owner or tenant may also write this note. It should be signed and dated by the individual named in the note. **If the officer inspects based on verbal consent, it is important to note in the case file the name of the person granting consent and their relationship to the property.**

**Consent may only be granted by a person who has legal standing with regard to the property.** "Legal standing" is limited to a person who is lawfully on the property and has been given access to the property by the owner or primary tenant. Examples are: property owner, tenant, or anyone permanently occupying the property with permission. If the inspection is an interior inspection, someone renting a room may only consent to inspection of the room they rent and any common areas. **In the case of a rental unit, the tenant (not the property owner), must give consent except with regard to common use areas.**

During the inspection, consent, including written consent, **may be revoked at any time by the person granting consent without any reason provided.** Reason (if known) for revoking shall be documented in the file. If the officer is told to stop inspecting the property and leave the

premises, the officer shall stop immediately and leave the property. In this case, the officer must seek an alternative method of inspecting the property such as an inspection warrant. Revocation of consent shall constitute a refusal to inspect for the purposes of an inspection warrant.

If the officer is unable to make contact at the site or is unable to conduct a site visit due to time constraints, the officer may send by certified and first class mail an "inspection request". The inspection request shall include the property owner's name, location of the apparent violations and a time frame to respond.

## **Juveniles**

When a code enforcement officer responds to a location and a juvenile (anyone under 18) answers the door, the officer shall ask to speak with an adult. If no adult is home, the officer shall not discuss anything with the juvenile regarding the code compliance case. The officer should provide a business card for the juvenile and, if applicable, advise the juvenile that the officer shall be posting a notice on the door. Do not assume someone is an adult if there is any possibility they are a minor -- ask their age. The officer may ask for identification, if there is doubt about authenticity of the person's age.

At no time should an officer enter a residence or ask permission to go into the rear yard when no adult is present. A juvenile has no legal standing to allow consent.

## **Documentation**

### **Purpose:**

To ensure that documentation is clear, concise, and supports a representative case narrative that records the conditions found on a property and which shall be used to accurately refresh the code enforcement officer's memory when testifying in court.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Complete documentation of all physical evidence and the CEO's observations are essential. The code enforcement officer/property maintenance inspector shall record observations as required per policy.

Descriptions of violation(s) must be thorough as to type, location, quantity and any other specific points of identification. For example, the description of an illegally constructed building would include the type and size of the building and the reason it is perceived as illegal. The narrative may be a required part of any future court appearances, including citations or warrants, as well as administrative hearings, and must be as complete as possible in order for the judge or administrative hearing officer to have a clear picture of compliance activities.

## **Photographs**

### **Purpose:**

To ensure a uniform process for documenting photos of violations and properly archiving them on the company document management system.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Whenever reasonably possible, the code enforcement officer/property maintenance inspector should attempt to document via photograph(s), violations discovered during the course of their

investigation. Code enforcement officer/property maintenance inspectors should take time to consider the best way to document the violations using photography by considering far and close views, before and after shots and thinking how to best capture the violation for someone who has not been on the site of the inspection so that they have an accurate understanding. Photos shall not be staged or altered to exaggerate the extent of any violation. All photographs shall be taken digitally.

The following procedures must be followed when managing photos after an inspection.

When the officer returns from a site investigation, the officer shall download the photo files to the appropriate folder and file on the document management system. Photos shall be labeled using the naming convention as described in the policies and procedures portion for digital photography and should also include the date the photos were taken.

Officers shall not extend cameras over fences, walls, through windows or other areas that the owner/occupant would likely have a right to privacy.

Prior to taking any photos from other than public access areas, the code enforcement officer must obtain verbal or written consent to the taking of photos from an individual with legal standing as described above. This consent must be obtained in addition to consent to conduct an inspection. If such consent for photographs is denied, the officer shall not take photos of the violations. If at any point in the inspection the owner/occupant asks the officer to stop taking photos, the officer shall stop. If an officer is denied permission to take photos, they shall consult the supervisor regarding the possibility of obtaining an inspection warrant.

## **Notification of All Interested Parties**

### **Purpose:**

To limit liability to the Company and to build a solid case through proper notification to ensure every interested party in a property has the opportunity to correct a violation.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Whenever an action by the code enforcement officer may have a financial impact on a property including but not limited to abatement action, notices advising of violations or pending actions shall be mailed certified and first class mail to all parties known to have a vested interest in the property. The county tax assessor maintains a computerized system of property owners which can be accessed via the Internet. This system shall be used to locate all persons who possess an interest in the property and their mailing addresses.

## **Complaint follow-up**

### **Purpose:**

To confirm with the complainant that the complaint was received and investigated.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Upon closure of the case the code enforcement officer will attempt to contact the complainant letting them know that the case is closed.

## **ADDITIONAL ENFORCEMENT STEPS TO BE TAKEN IF INFORMAL EFFORTS TO OBTAIN COMPLIANCE ARE NOT EFFECTIVE**

### **Purpose:**

To provide options for the Code Enforcement Officer/Property Maintenance Inspector if informal efforts to attain compliance are not successful.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

#### **Overview of Citations and Notices and Referral to Counsel**

If the code enforcement officer is not able to attain voluntary correction after providing the property owner or other person(s) responsible for the violation a reasonable opportunity to cure the violation one or more of the following enforcement steps should be taken. The severity of the violation, the extent to which it poses a threat to public or private health and safety, and the applicable statutory or case law that applies to the particular violation will dictate the most appropriate steps.

#### **Procedures Regarding Issuance of Notices of Violation**

### **Purpose:**

To provide formal notification to property owners and occupants of property and/or those responsible for code violations of the nature of the violations and the corrective action that is required; to provide a defined, reasonable period of time in which the corrective action must be completed; and to provide formal notice that an administrative hearing may be held if a citation issued for non-compliance if the required corrective action is not completed within the time allowed.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

#### **Issuance and Contents of Notices of Violations/Order to Abate Condition**

A Notice of Violation/Order to Abate Condition hereafter referred to as NOV shall (unless circumstances dictate otherwise, which should be documented in each file) be issued and delivered as provided to the owner of property where a violation exists, to the occupants or operators of businesses on properties where a violation exists, and to any and all persons responsible to any degree for a violation. The NOV shall contain the following information:

1. The date(s) of the violation;
2. The street address, assessor's parcel number and/or, if necessary, a description of the location where the violation occurred;
3. The name and address of the responsible party(s), if known;
4. The section of the applicable code or regulation violated and a description of the violation;
5. The action required to correct the violation;
6. The date by which the corrective action should be completed;
7. The time period by which the violation must be corrected;
8. A statement that the person may be issued a citation and be required to appear before the local administrative hearing officer or circuit court for non-compliance;
9. The name and signature of the Code Enforcement Officer/Property Maintenance Inspector issuing the NOV

10. Language indicating an appeal may be filed.

### **Delivery/Posting/Mailing of NOV**

If the person responsible for the code violation is present at the scene of the violation, the code enforcement officer shall provide the person with a copy of the NOV.

If the person responsible for the code violation is not present at the scene of the violation, the Code Enforcement Officer/Property Maintenance Inspector shall send copies of the NOV by certified mail, return receipt requested, and by first class mail to (1) the property owner and, if different from the property owner, to the person(s) responsible for the violation, at the property address, and (2) to the address listed for the property owner as shown on the last county assessment address, if that address is different from the property address. In certain situations, the NOV may be required to be posted on the property.

### **The Right to Contest Citations**

Code enforcement officers will be familiar with the provisions of rules related to procedures applicable to when a NOV is contested and to the noticing requirements, hearing requirements, and the prescribed method for conducting the hearing before a hearing officer or Circuit Court Judge should the occasion arise. This section highlights the steps that code enforcement officers shall be most directly involved in implementing.

Any recipient of a NOV may apply for an appeal of the assessment as per the requirements as provided for by the municipality. A "right of appeal" is indicated on all notices of violation that explain the rights to file for an appeal.

### **Consequences of Failure to Comply with the NOV**

The failure to comply with a Notice of Violation as identified may result in a citation/notice to appear before local adjudication be issued.

Following issuance of a NOV, an inspection is necessary after expiration of the deadline for compliance as specified in the notice to determine compliance, or if the violation is ongoing or recurring.

#### **Steps to be Taken Once Compliance Has Been Reached**

When compliance is attained, the code enforcement officer shall take the following steps:

1. The code enforcement officer shall inform the complainant of the correction of the violation; and
2. The case file shall be noted as resolved, with notes explaining the compliance, and entered into the records system as closed by the code enforcement officer

### **Violation is Ongoing or Repeats**

If it is determined that compliance has not been attained, or that a new, ongoing, or repeated violation of the same type has occurred, the code enforcement officer may find it necessary to issue additional Notices of Violation or a citation depending on the history of the property. The code enforcement officer should speak with the supervisor about this condition so appropriate action to be taken can be determined. It may be necessary to move straight to a citation depending on the situation.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SEARCH WARRANTS**

### **Inspection Warrants**

#### **Purpose:**

To gain access to a property to inspect for violations if the code enforcement officer has reasonable suspicion to believe a violation exists and if the property owner or tenant either (1) refuses access; or (2) fails to respond to the request for access.

#### **Policy and Procedures:**

An inspection warrant may be obtained from the courts when the property owner or tenant does not provide access to the property for verification of violations. A refusal by a property owner to grant entry is required prior to seeking an inspection warrant.

Prior to obtaining a warrant, the officer may use a variety of options to reach a property owner and request an inspection. If the code complaint is a health and safety issue, the officer should attempt to reach the owner/tenant in person at the property. If the complaint is not an immediate concern, the officer shall send an inspection request letter by regular and certified mail. If there is no response to the letter, the officer may search for a telephone number to contact the owner and/or tenant. If all of the above actions are exhausted or if the owner/tenant in charge of the property/area refuses reasonable entry the officer may proceed to obtain a warrant.

### **Process to Obtain a Warrant**

#### **Purpose:**

To ensure proper processes are followed when obtaining a warrant.

#### **Policy and Procedures:**

The following steps shall be taken:

1. Code enforcement officers shall work with village representatives to apply to the court or an inspection warrant as provided for in state statutes.
2. All inspection warrant declarations shall be typed and approved by the Code Supervisor prior to seeking a judge's approval. The declaration shall describe the premises, place, buildings, structures or vehicles to be inspected. Additionally, it should contain a statement describing the reason for the warrant request, the owner or tenant refusal or failure to consent to accessed.
3. The inspection warrant is valid for only 72 hours after being signed by a judge and must be served between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and only with the occupant present. Only the premises, places, buildings, structures and vehicles described in the warrant may be inspected. Force may not be used to break through a gate or door unless authorized in the warrant. The police or sheriff's office should be utilized to accompany the code enforcement officer when serving an inspection warrant. The property owner/tenant should be provided a copy of the warrant and the complaint for warrant during the execution of the warrant.
4. Once the inspection warrant has been served, the code enforcement officer shall complete the information required (results of the execution of the warrant) and return same to the Court.
5. The complainant shall be notified of the results of each investigation and the status of

the case. Notification may be by telephone or by mail or email. All telephone updates must be documented in the narrative of the file.

## **Personnel**

### **Inspector Safety - Basic Officer Safety Rule Purpose:**

To maintain safety for all code enforcement officers whether in the field or in the office the following BASE rule shall be used:

**Be Alert**

**Scan for Warning Signs**

**Evacuate**

### **Policy and Procedures:**

1. Code enforcement officers should ACT WITH PURPOSE. It establishes confidence, commands presence and can act as a deterrent to an attack. **Officers should not be demeaning, authoritative or argumentative at any time.**
2. Code enforcement officers should eliminate distractions. Officers should not do anything that will preoccupy them from safely making observations and interacting with the public.
3. During field interviews, code enforcement officer shall ensure that they:
  - Are in a position of advantage or have an escape route readily available.
    - Are alert for warning signs of aggression from both people and animals on the property.
    - When making contact with an individual, attempt to determine if there are other people or animals on the property. Ask for any hazards that may be present on the property such as failed septic systems, hazardous electrical, etc.
    - Be alert for weapons. If an officer observes what they think is a weapon, the preferred option shall be to end the conversation and leave the area safely and immediately.
4. Code enforcement officer shall exhibit care when dealing with animals
  - (i) All animals encountered in the field shall be treated with caution. Watch for aggressive or threatening behavior and respond accordingly.
  - (ii) Have a responsible party secure any animals which may be hostile to a code enforcement officer during the inspection.
  - (iii) Consider asking local Animal Control to assist and secure hostile animals during the inspection.
5. Inspecting Vacant Buildings/Structures
  - (i) Code enforcement officers shall NOT enter a non-residential building/structure that appears to not be currently occupied. If a building or structure has indications of not being occupied the code enforcement officer shall attempt to contact a responsible party to determine occupancy and safely make contact

with any individual that may be inside the building/structure.

- (ii) In addition to safety concerns, a sign of current occupancy will usually trigger the need to obtain consent or a warrant to continue the inspection.
- (iii) Code enforcement officer should knock loudly and announce their presence when conducting inspections. Wait for a response and continue to look for signs of current occupancy.
- (iv) If the code enforcement officer is unable to contact a responsible party, law enforcement may be contacted to ensure that the inspection of the building/structure can be made safely.

## **Expectations**

6. When in the field, code enforcement officers are expected to know their approximate location at all times especially when having contact with other personnel to be able to report it in the case of an emergency.
7. Code enforcement officers are expected to strive to maintain a “professional face” when interacting with upset or angry individuals so that they can remain detached enough to safely observe the actions of the individual and assess any possible threats or hazardous situations.
8. Code enforcement officers are expected to make note of suspicious activity or hazards for reporting to the appropriate agency.
9. Code enforcement officers are never expected to knowingly put themselves into dangerous or harmful situations.
  - (i) When a code enforcement officer may face potentially dangerous or harmful situations, staff shall consult with a supervisor to address the hazards prior to entering a dangerous situation. Dangerous situations should always be avoided. Such measures to address the hazards could include requesting the presence/assistance of a police officer or performing the inspection only after law enforcement has mitigated the hazard.
  - (ii) If a code enforcement officer observes a hazard which constitutes an immediate threat to life or property, the code enforcement officer Inspector shall immediately take steps to ensure their safety and make the necessary notification to 911 and/or other first responders. Immediately after this notification, the code enforcement officer shall contact their supervisor when it is safe to do so.
10. The most important thing to do if the area does not appear to be safe is to ACT by leaving the area. The best response for a code enforcement officer when confronted with a direct threat is to safely and immediately leave.

## **Threats, Assaults and Batteries**

All threats, assaults and batteries directed at code enforcement officers are serious and shall be reported to supervision, management, and law enforcement, immediately (as soon as it is safe to do so). Code enforcement officers should obtain as much information as safely possible about the subject making the threat, assault or battery, including their intent, ability and desire to carry out their actions, and include this information in the report to law enforcement and the supervisor.

## **Avoiding Conflict**

The use of body language, choice of words, and tone should all be employed to de-escalate a potentially hostile situation. Use these techniques if it is safe to do so to try and complete an assignment.

If de-escalation is not effective, code enforcement officer should end the communication and leave the area. This applies to both hostile subjects and hostile animals.

## **Reporting**

Code enforcement officers are required to immediately report all compromises to officer/staff/safety events to a supervisor. After any verbal notification of an officer/staff safety issue, the supervisor shall require the code enforcement officer to submit a written report of the situation.

## **SPECIFIC URGENT CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Failed Septic**

#### **Purpose:**

To ensure a uniform response to septic failures.

#### **Policy and Procedures:**

Code enforcement officer assigned to failed septic calls shall respond immediately to the complaint by inspecting the property and following the procedures below:

1. Confirm the existence of the failed septic system. This is usually obvious due to a large hole in the ground and/or the smell of sewage from the area.
2. **Use extreme caution around the failed septic system.** The visible opening of the septic tank may appear to be one or two feet in diameter when the actual tank size might be much larger.
3. Immediately secure the general area with caution tape. This area should be taped a minimum of 15 feet away from the tank opening.
4. Attempt to locate a property owner or tenant.
5. If the owner is located on site or if the owner is later contacted, the code enforcement officer shall notify them that they need to call a septic company immediately to respond to the location as soon as possible.
  - If the owner cannot be located on site, the code enforcement officer shall immediately make every attempt to contact the owner. Code enforcement officers shall use any and all resources available to make contact with the owner; i.e., utility records, property profiles, internet searches, etc. If the code enforcement officer cannot make contact with the owner, the code enforcement officer shall contact the supervisor and review the situation to determine whether an

- emergency abatement is necessary.
- After contact is made, the code enforcement officer shall request that the owner transmit a copy of the contract with the septic company to verify that a contract has been executed for the repair.

## **Unsecured Hazardous Pool**

### **Purpose:**

To ensure a uniform response to Unsecured Hazardous Pool complaints.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Code enforcement officers responding to complaints regarding unsecured swimming pools need to abate the violation as quickly as possible. If the pool is over twenty-four inches (24") deep, it is required to have a minimum of a four-foot fence surrounding it in most communities.

If the swimming pool is not properly protected, the code enforcement officer shall make every attempt to notify the property owner by telephone. The code enforcement officer shall also send written notice to the property owner by certified mail that same day, instructing the property owner to repair, replace, or install a protective fence (Be aware that some communities do not require fences around pools. If in doubt check with the municipality or check their specific codelanguage) If the code enforcement officer cannot make contact with the owner, the code enforcement officer shall contact a supervisor to review the situation to determine whether an emergency abatement is necessary.

## **Utility Violations - Lack of Utilities in a Dwelling**

### **Purpose:**

To ensure a uniform response to complaints regarding dwellings with no utilities.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Dwelling properties are required to have hot, running water at a sink. Utilities must be able to heat a dwelling to a temperature established by the community. Electrical lighting is required. Therefore, in most cases, homes are required to have natural gas/electrical and water services. There may be dwellings that are approved as having all electric appliances and heating and therefore not required to have gas service.

When a code enforcement officer responds to a complaint involving a residence without utilities, the code enforcement officer should take into account, depending on the specific utility:

- The season of year;
- The presence of children or elderly persons in the dwelling;
- Whether the subjects are in the residence legally; and
- What other Code violations are present.

Generally, a code enforcement officer should give a very short time frame for the subjects to have their utilities restored, i.e., one-week maximum. The supervisor shall be advised if the code enforcement officer believes the subject needs more than one week to comply. There may be times when it will be necessary to post the building for "no occupancy". This determination will be made by the municipal administration and not the officer. The Officer should contact the supervisor with the facts of the inspection and the supervisor will then have conversation with the

municipal administration as to what additional action to take, if any.

## **Conclusion**

It is expected that all Code Enforcement Officers/Property Maintenance Inspectors will adhere to the policies as set forth in this manual. There will be occasions when deviations may be necessary and if so performed should be reported to the supervisor.

In all activities it is critical that the Code Enforcement Officer/Property Maintenance Inspector does their best to stay safe while performing their duties. Do not take unnecessary risks at any time. When unsure of what specific action to take at a challenging investigation/inspection contact a supervisor or a member of the management team before taking any action. All accidents or injuries must be reported immediately to the supervisor or other member of management as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

## **Procedures for fire inspection for the Central Stickney Fire Protection District**

The fire inspector assigned to perform fire prevention inspections for the Central Stickney Fire Protection District shall follow the following procedures:

Fire inspections shall be performed on Tuesdays of each week. The Fire District is responsible for fire prevention inspections for 67 businesses encompassing a variety of occupancies. It is the intention of the fire district to conduct fire prevention inspections in order to maintain a safe and healthy environment for business owners and their employees as well as the entire community.

The B&F Fire Inspector shall use an iPad provided by the fire district while performing fire prevention inspections using Firehouse Software. The fire district will assign a user name and password to the inspector for access to the Firehouse software. The fire district will provide the inspector with identification from the fire district to have available and should be displayed while performing fire inspections for the district.

**The fire protection district has adopted the 2018 Edition of the International Fire Code. Inspections will be performed under this code and any local amendments the fire district may have. The fire district will provide a checklist to be used in the inspection process and as stated the inspection will be marked using the Firehouse software.**

**The information below is related specifically to The Central Stickney Fire Protection District, Bureau of Fire Prevention.**

The Fire District covers roughly 5 square miles encompassing unincorporated Stickney Township. The Fire Prevention Bureau shall be the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) and is responsible for all Life Safety and Fire Prevention Code enforcement and the review of all such related plans. The fire prevention bureau works in conjunction with the Cook County Building Department and will ensure that all businesses are up to current standards prior to issuing any Occupancy Permits in our Fire District.

### **Initial Inspections / Occupancy Permits**

All new construction and change of use and/or occupant shall require an inspection that will ensure the occupancy is compliant with current standards. This inspection shall be completed before an occupancy permit will be issued and operations are allowed to begin. Occupants that fail to comply with this, may be subject to a STOP WORK ORDER until an inspection and approval is granted. This inspection shall also be forwarded to the Cook County Building Department.

### **Fire Protection Upgrades**

Any building that is vacant more than 30 days or when a change of occupancy occurs, shall comply with the ordinance before any use of occupancy will be granted.

### **Annual Fire Inspections**

All occupancies shall have a fire inspection completed annually.

## **Fire Alarms**

All commercial / mercantile occupancies shall have a fire alarm installed in accordance with NFPA 72. The fire alarm system shall be tested by a licensed company annually. The certificate of completion of fire alarm system test shall be on hand at all times, and a copy shall be submitted to the Bureau of Fire Prevention.

## **Fire Alarm Monitoring**

All fire alarms shall be monitored directly by our Dispatch Center in Oak Lawn. Occupant/Owner shall ensure direct connect of their Fire Alarm System is completed.

## **Fire Extinguishers**

All fire extinguishers shall be tested by a licensed company annually.

## **Fire Sprinkler System Requirements**

The fire suppression system shall be tested by a licensed company annually. This certificate shall be on hand at all times and a copy shall be submitted to the Bureau of fire Prevention. If the suppression system contains a fire pump, the fire pump shall be tested by a licensed company annually. This certificate shall be on hand at all times and a copy shall be submitted to the Bureau of Fire Prevention.

## **Knox Box Requirements**

All commercial/mercantile occupancies that have a fire alarm or fire suppression system shall have a Knox Box installed on the building. The Knox Box shall have a current set of keys for the occupancy to access ALL parts of the building. A Knox Box Pad Lock will be required for any exterior gates that access the building. If you change any keys to your business, please let us know and we will gladly place the new keys in the Knox Box.

**Knox Box keys are not to be used to provide access to the building for inspection purposes.** The purpose of having a Knox Box key is to ensure the keys in the box are current and operate the locks intended. The key is to be picked up at the fire district each day and returned to the district prior to returning to the office.

## **Report Forms**

A copy of the completed report form will be sent to the business contact person and to the office of B&F Construction Code Services. Compliance dates for most violations will be 30 days from the date of the inspection. If a violation involves life safety or other significant issue the fire inspector may reduce the 30 days to a more appropriate time frame. Follow ups/reinspections will be completed by the fire inspector after the compliance date.

Procedures for the functioning of the inspection tablet and checklist will be provided by the Fire District.

Should the fire inspector have any problems during his time performing inspections he/she should contact the **Deputy Fire Chief Jason Staidl Cell (773) 447-2783**

### Occupancy List – Central Stickney Fire Protection District

Fire inspections should be performed following the list provided and the time provided as close as possible. There will of course be situations where the exact order may not be followed such as difficulty making contact, rescheduling of inspections etc. This list is to be used as a preferred method for performing the inspections, however needed changes are acceptable.

	<b>DATE</b>	<b>INSPECTOR</b>	<b>BUSINESS</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>
Feb			Canadian National Railway	4700 S. Merrimac
Feb			Chicago Bulk Sales & Leasing	4750 S. Merrimac
Feb			American Demolition	4900 S. Merrimac
Feb			New Construction	5064 S. Merrimac
Mar			Korex "E"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			Mario Figueroa "C"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			GTI "D"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			The Wrench "B"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			Torch Trailer "F"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			CTR "G"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			6500 Corp. "A"	6200 W. 51st St.
Mar			Ideal Box	4800 S. Austin
April			Brenntag	4801 S. Austin
April			Rockfon	4849 S. Austin
April			Rockfon	4850 S. Austin
April			Rockfon	4901 S. Austin
April			All Truck	4924 S. Austin
April			Rockfon	5950 W. 51st St.
April			J & J Trucking	5950 W. 51st St.
May			4900 Mason LLC	4900 S. Mason
May			Paramount Truck Body	4929 S. Mason
May			51st St. Water Assc.	4950 S. Mason
May			AssetsBiz Corp.	5001 S. Mason
June			Jet Transport	4900 S. Monitor
June			The Hub Group	4901 S. Monitor
June			Jet Transport	4910 S. Monitor
June			B.J. Trailer	4911 S. Monitor
June			Cotton Connection	4920 S. Monitor

June			McGill Construction	4928 S. Monitor
June			MGM Display	4956 S. Monitor
June			Ideal Box	5001 S. Monitor
June			Sundberg	5852 W. 51st St.
July			51st St. Water Assc.	4901 S. Menard
July			Ideal Box	5750 W. 51st St.
July			Rose Packing	4900 S. Major
July			Rose Packing	5000 S. Major
July			Rose Packing	5656 W. 51st St.
July			Vision	5620 W. 51st St.
July			Daubert Chemical	4700 S. Central
Aug			47th Street Auto	4731 S. Central
Aug			Ann Dan Building	4751 S. Central
Aug			Donalds Hotdogs	4759 S. Central
Aug			FedEx Service Center	4800 S. Central
Aug			FedEx Shop Building	4800 S. Central
Aug			Vacant	4839 S. Central
Sept			Burger King	4851 S. Central
Sept			Citgo	4901 S. Central
Sept			Wally Wash	4917 S. Central
Sept			Combined Warehouse	4920 S. Central
Sept			Marathon	4957 S. Central
Sept			Combined Warehouse	5000 S. Central
Oct			Apartment Building 3 Unit	5011 S. Central
Oct			Apartment Building 3 Unit	5017 S. Central
Oct			Apartment Building 3 Unit	5017 1/2 S. Central
Oct			Apartment Building 3 Unit	5023 S. Central
Oct			Central Stickney Fire Dept.	4951 S. Lotus
Oct			Central Stickney Park Dist.	4715 S. Long
Oct			Central Stickney Medical Center	4949 S. Long
Oct			Sahs School	5001 S. Long
Nov			Apartment Building 5 Unit	4801 S. Lorel
Nov			Apartment Building 3 Unit	5238 W. 51st St.
Nov			Cynthia's Market (Vacant)	4958 S. Latrobe

Nov			Swatware	5228 W. 51st St.
Nov			Central Stickney Sanitary Dist.	4960 S. Laramie