

City of Charleston, South Carolina

March 30, 2020

Building & Trade Inspection Operation Changes Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Please note - The City's *Emergency Ordinance on Stay at Home* does allow for building construction to continue, please refer to excerpted ordinance sections at the end of this message.

As with all City services, Building Inspections Division is operating under OPCON1. This means we are NOT open to the public and we are operating half-staff for all plan review, inspections and administrative team services. This is to reduce COVID19 exposure to the general public and City employees.

In an effort to minimize inspector exposure and to support our construction industry during the COVID19 pandemic, The City has created the following requirements for City field inspections. These procedures are effective only while The City is actively responding to COVID19 pandemic. Once The City returns to normal operations, these procedures are no longer valid.

- Building Inspections is operating under OPCON1, so inspection service delivery will be reduced, please plan for delays.
- Building and trade inspections will continue, when practical, based on guidance from Center for Disease Control (CDC), South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and City leadership.
- City deemed non-critical inspections and inspections of existing occupied structures may be deferred or delayed.
- The City will not inspect buildings and structures that have 3 or more people congregated in enclosed areas.
 - The City inspector may ask for occupants to vacate in order to conduct the inspection
 - The City inspector may ask for the inspection to be rescheduled when the areas/buildings are cleared of occupants
- The City will not inspect building and structures that have occupants who are suspected of or notify the inspector of being sick or ill.
- The City inspector may ask occupants if they feel sick or know of anyone who may be sick or ill before entering the building.

3rd Party Inspection Program Requirements

The City is offering customers the use of our existing 3rd Party Inspection Program. All customers must first request to use third party inspections and provide the required documentation as outlined in the policy. Please refer to our [Third Party Inspections](#) webpage.

Alternatives to City Field Inspections

Customers can contact their City inspection team to discuss providing alternative documentation for City inspections. Please note, The City has the discretion to either accept or deny alternative documentation.

Some types of acceptable methods are:

- **Photography** – image files must be a .pdf and the file name shall include the project address and description, examples:
 - *2_George_St_Garge_Foundation.pdf*
 - *80_Broad_St_3rd_story_corridor_plenum.pdf*
- **Field Reports** – A field report, signed and sealed by a South Carolina licensed design professional (Architects, Engineers)

Single-family Dwellings (Detached, Duplex, and Townhomes) Inspections & Individual Dwelling Units Inspections within Multi-family Buildings

- **Foundations, Foundation Walls, Bond-beams, Piers** – conducted as normal
- **Slabs** – scheduled based on City staffing and workload, please expect delays in service delivery
- **Plumbing Slab** – this will be combined with building slab and tested at *Combined Rough-in*
- **Water and Sewer Laterals** – must be tested at plumbing rough-in
- **Rough-in, Combined All Trades** - must be ready for one combined City inspection
 - Includes Fireplace, Plumbing, Mechanical, Electrical, and Fuel- gas inspection must all be requested for one City inspection trip
 - The entire plumbing system (laterals, under-slab, stacks, etc.) to utility connection will be tested at one time
 - All fire blocking, draft stopping, and sealing of fire penetrations must be complete for this inspection
- **Projects within the Special Flood Hazard Area** – Submit for approval Under Construction Elevation Certificate
- **Framing, Combined**
 - Combined sheathing, strapping, tie-downs, and framing inspections will be conducted simultaneously before exterior vapor barrier wrap is installed.
 - Cutting, notching, fire blocking, draft stopping, and sealing of fire penetrations will be also be conducted
 - This can be requested prior to combined rough-in trade inspections, but must notify Building Inspections (inspections@charleston-sc.gov) in order to make request
- **Insulation** - this inspection will not be conducted during this time, but the inspection must still be requested through the system
- **Fire Rated Assembly** – Request as needed
- **Electrical Pre-power & Service and Fuel-gas Pre-service**
 - These inspections can be requested after all rough inspections have been passed. All receptacles, devices, switches, etc. must be installed or terminated
 - After drywall, all electrical panel covers (interior and exterior) must be removed for inspection.
- **Projects within the Special Flood Hazard Area** – Submit for approval Finished (Final) Elevation Certificate
- **Finals, Combined Trades & Building** - must be ready for one combined City inspection
 - Includes Fireplace, Plumbing, Mechanical, Electrical, Fuel-gas and Building must all be requested for one City inspection trip.

- [Certificate of Construction Completion \(a.k.a. CO\)](#) – requested when all finals are approved, including other City divisions and water utility connections.
- **Pool Related Inspections** - scheduled based on City staffing and workload, please expect delays in service delivery
- **Solar Related Inspections** - scheduled based on City staffing and workload, please expect delays in service delivery

Contact Us

Please contact us if you have questions or need guidance:

- inspections@charleston-sc.gov
- 843.724.7441 (please note, we do not accept inspection requests via telephone)

Resources

- [Inspections Procedures](#)
- [Building Inspections Division](#)
- [Customer Access Portal \(CAP\)](#)
- [Permit Center Website](#)

Excerpted sections from the City of Charleston’s *Emergency Ordinance on Stay at Home* related to building construction:

- “A) Individuals, who must go out for purposes of working at or conducting business with any Essential Service business provider, shall practice social distancing of at least six feet with the exception of those traveling in the same vehicle to or from an Essential Service for purposes of work or to conduct business at an Essential Service.”
- “C) Places conducting Essential Service operations shall take all reasonable measures, including limiting the number of individuals in their businesses, to facilitate and ensure social distancing of at least six feet.”

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- “9. Construction including, skilled trades such as electricians, plumbers, other related construction firms and professionals for essential infrastructure or for emergency repair and safety purposes, other construction where the contractor can ensure social distancing.”