

Section Three

Field Procedures

Scope

This section contains descriptions of the various inspections and other duties performed by the field inspectors of Knox County Codes Administration.

General

Engineering, Codes Enforcement, Fire, and Building Inspection personnel, perform a variety of types of field inspections to check for compliance with regulations. These include pre-permit inspections, existing building inspections, new building inspections, sign inspections, special inspections such as for building sprinkler systems or fire alarm systems tests, re-inspection of violations found on previous inspections, complaint investigations such as for dirty lots or blighted properties, stop work orders, violation notifications, and citations.

Pre-Permit Inspections

Inspections to check for compliance with regulations are performed prior to the issuance of permits for off premise advertising signs (billboards) and for cellular telecommunication towers. For billboards the minimum distance requirements between signs and to residential zones is checked as well as the proximity to any scenic roadways or parkways. For towers the proposed location is checked for proximity to other towers or tall structures on which antennae co-location could avoid the erection of the new tower.

Occasionally we will visit a job site with the owner or developer on a preliminary basis to advise on any issues of regulations that are of concern. This can help to alleviate permitting problems and get a project headed in the right direction. This is especially helpful when a new business is planning on moving into an existing building.

Existing Buildings

Commercial

Inspections of existing buildings by the Knox County Fire Prevention Bureau are conducted on a regular basis and scheduled by priority. All commercial occupancies are ranked as either high hazard or low hazard. High hazard locations are inspected on an annual basis. Once the high hazard inspections have been completed, low hazard occupancies are inspected during the remainder of the year. At the beginning of the next year, high hazard occupancies will be inspected again. Once these are completed, the low hazard occupancies are inspected where they were stopped the year before. It takes approximately two years to complete the low hazard occupancy inspections. Currently Knox County is divided into three separate geographic regions for these inspections.

These inspections are typically conducted without prior notice. Once on site the fire inspector will present the proper identification and ask to conduct a fire and life safety inspection of the facility. If this date and time is inconvenient then another time will be arranged to conduct the inspection before the inspector leaves.

The inspector will examine all areas of the facility for fire prevention and life safety concerns. At the owner's discretion, they may accompany the inspector during the inspection. Once completed, the inspector will provide the responsible party with a copy of the inspection report documenting any violations that need to be corrected. All violations shall be corrected in a timely manner. Any violations that pose an immediate life safety threat shall be corrected while the inspector is on site if possible. If not, then a follow-up inspection will be conducted after a reasonable amount of time has elapsed to correct the violation.

Residential

Rehabilitation inspections are performed on existing one and two-family dwellings when it is reported to this office that there are code violations. An inspection is scheduled at a time that is acceptable for the building inspector, the owner or other responsible party and the tenants, if any. The inspector inspects the entire dwelling and writes down all items that are code deficiencies. A copy of these code deficiencies will be given to the responsible party on site. The list of code deficiencies is then taken to the office and typed in letter form, which will identify each deficiency with the appropriate code section. This letter will state the number of days allowed to correct the code deficiencies and will be mailed to all parties involved. After the allotted time period the inspector will re-inspect the structure to verify that all corrections have been made. If the corrections have not been made the inspector may choose to extend the time for repairs if the work is progressing or they may issue a citation to Knox County General Sessions Court.

Code Enforcement

The Code Enforcement Officers inspect abandoned, blighted structures and properties for zoning and code ordinance violations. Inspections are generally completed on a complaint basis. When the inspection has been conducted, the owner and any other responsible party are notified of violations and time allowed to comply. Each complaint is evaluated individually. To assure compliance, if not met, a citation to General Sessions Court may be issued or clean up by the Knox County Engineering and Public Works Department may be ordered and fees assessed back to the responsible party.

New Permit Inspections

Residential Inspections

One and two-family dwellings and buildings accessory thereto are inspected by a building inspector to check for compliance with the adopted codes and ordinances. New residential structures normally require three inspections.

The first inspection is called the footing inspection and is to be performed when the foundation is ready to pour. The items checked on this inspection will include the posting of the permit card and lot number or other site identification, building setbacks, erosion control, footing sizes and

depths, the condition of the soil in the excavation for bearing capacity, placement and size of reinforcing when required and proper installation of form work and grade stakes.

The second inspection is called the framing and plumbing inspection and is to be performed when all framing is complete and the water supply and drainage systems are complete and have the pressure tests on. The items checked on this inspection will include the proper materials, sizes, arrangements and connections of the components of the structural and plumbing systems, the rough-in of any HVAC components or other items which would be later concealed, firestopping, stair and rail details, bedroom egress, and ventilation of and access to crawl and attic spaces.

The third inspection is called the final and gas inspection and is to be performed when the building is complete and ready to occupy. The items checked on this inspection will include a properly installed and working smoke alarm system, garage separation, fireplaces, gas appliances and piping including a pressure test, decks, stairs, rails, tempered glazing where required, siding, roofing, gutters and final site grading. Note: The Gas and Final inspection can be done separately to get an early however; there will be an additional charge.

Modular, manufactured or mobile homes require only the footing and final inspections. Accessory buildings, such as storage buildings and garages must have a separate permit and inspections. Swimming pools require only the footing and final inspections and some home improvement permits such as re-roofing require only the final inspection.

After each inspection, the inspector will always give a copy of the inspection ticket to the builder indicating that the inspection was passed or rejected. If the inspection is rejected, then the reasons for rejection will be listed on the inspection ticket. Re-inspection should be scheduled when items are corrected.

All electrical inspections are to be done by the State of Tennessee electrical inspector.

Commercial Inspections

Commercial buildings and multi-family residential buildings such as apartments and condominiums are to be inspected by both the building and fire inspectors. The number of inspections required will vary depending on the size of the building and the type of components or systems involved. Appendix C shows a sample Commercial Inspection Checklist. The contractor will be given a list of required inspections, which will include some or all of the following.

Foundation inspections are to be performed when the concrete is ready to pour. This may require more than one inspection for large buildings. The items checked on this inspection will include the posting of the permit card and lot number or other site identification, building setbacks, erosion control and foundations on solid bearing ground sized and reinforced according to the design drawings.

Slab inspections are to be performed when the concrete is ready to pour. The items checked on this inspection will include any under slab utilities or systems with pressure tests on when required and design details of the slab such as thickness and reinforcement installed according to the design drawings.

Framing inspections are to be performed when all framing is complete and the water supply and drainage systems are complete and have the pressure tests on. The items checked on this inspection will include the proper materials, sizes, arrangements, and connections of the components of the structural and plumbing systems according to the design drawings, the rough-in of any HVAC components or other items which would be later concealed, fireblocking, concealed firestopping and stair and rail details.

Mechanical inspections are to be performed when installation is complete. The items checked on this inspection would include ductwork, fire dampers, HVAC controls, fire sprinkler piping and hanger and head placement. Fire sprinkler piping is to be tested for 2 hours under pressure.

Fire system inspections are to be performed when installation is complete. The items checked on this inspection would include fire alarm systems and controls, automatic fire doors, exit signs, emergency lighting and emergency generators.

Fire rated assemblies and fire door inspections are to be performed after installation is complete. The items checked on this inspection will include all firestopping and all fire rated doors with the hardware installed.

Interior finish inspections are to be performed after installation is complete. The items checked on this inspection would include all paneling, wallpaper, wainscot, carpeting, and other decorative finishes.

Final building inspections are to be performed when the building is complete with electrical power on. The items checked on this inspection will include plumbing fixtures in place and connected, mechanical systems connected, gas appliances connected with pressure tests on, handicapped accessibility and all site improvements including paving and landscaping.

Final fire inspections are to be performed when the building is complete. The items checked will include fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire sprinkler systems, kitchen hood systems, clean agent systems, fire extinguishment systems and fire lanes.

After each inspection the inspector will always give a copy of the inspection ticket to the builder indicating that the inspection was passed or rejected. If the inspection is rejected the reasons for rejection will be listed on the inspection ticket. All electrical inspections are to be done by the State of Tennessee electrical inspector.

Re-inspections

When an inspector rejects an item on an inspection it must be corrected and then scheduled for re-inspection before proceeding with the rest of the work unless the rejected item can be inspected at the time of the next regular inspection. If the work to be inspected is not accessible due to locked gates, locked doors or other reasons and no one is on site to provide access, then the inspector will reject the inspection and post a copy of the inspection ticket on the site somewhere in plain view and a re-inspection will be required. To help expedite their jobs and keep their work on schedule sometimes builders use extra inspections. An example of this would be to schedule a partial framing inspection so that exterior wall coverings such as brick can be installed while some framing or plumbing is still being completed. A re-inspection fee will be charged for these extra inspections. **All re-inspection fees must be paid before a Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Completion will be issued.**

Fire Investigation

The Knox County Fire Investigation Unit is responsible for conducting fire investigations in Knox County. The unit is staffed by the Fire Marshal, an investigator from the Fire Bureau, a detective from the Sheriff's office and four volunteer investigators from the various fire departments in Knox County. The unit is responsible for determining the origin and cause of all structure fires in Knox County. The unit also investigates vehicle and ground cover fires when the engine company suspects an incendiary cause. All follow-up investigations are the responsibility of the Sheriff's detective and the Fire Bureau investigator. The Knox County Fire Investigation Task Force, a group of firefighters, law enforcement officers and technical experts trained in conducting origin and cause investigations, assists the Fire Investigation Unit at fire scenes.

Complaint Investigation

The Knox County Code Administration office receives complaints concerning a variety of alleged violations of the adopted codes and ordinances. These complaints involve matters such as surface runoff, drainage, erosion, flooding, dumping, setbacks, dirty lots, blighted properties, junk cars, non-conforming uses, signs, dangerous structures, building without a permit, building contrary to the code, unlicensed builders, fire hazards, life safety, and other concerns of the citizens of Knox County. After a complaint is received, an inspection will be conducted to verify if there is a violation. This inspection will be conducted without prior notice to the responsible party and in a timely manner depending on the severity of the alleged violation. Once on site the inspector will identify him or herself and conduct the inspection. After completing the inspection the inspector will inform the responsible party of any violations found, advise what actions must be taken to correct the violations and set the time frame in which the violations must be corrected. After the allotted time, a re-inspection will be performed to verify compliance or to take further action if the violations still exist. These further actions may include citations to Knox County General Session's court or the issuance of work orders for the cleaning of property or for the demolition of structures.

Violation Notice / Stop Work Orders

In the event that use, occupancy of or work on any building, structure, electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system is being done contrary to the provisions of the adopted codes and ordinances or in a dangerous or unsafe manner, a violation notice / stop work order will be issued to the owner of the property, their agent or to the person doing the work notifying them that such use, occupancy or work must immediately cease. Such notice shall be in writing and shall state the conditions under which work may be resumed. Where an emergency exists, the inspector shall not be required to give a written notice prior to stopping the work.

Citations

All Knox County Inspectors and Code Enforcement Officers are deputized and authorized to issue a misdemeanor citation. Citations can be issued immediately upon inspection of violation or in some cases after efforts to achieve compliance have failed. A Judge in General Sessions Court will assess court costs and fines. See "Violations and Penalties" in Section One.

Conclusion

It is not the intent of this manual to replace any part of the codes or ordinances. It is a guideline intended to help those interested to use them and to help with the administration of them. In the case of any conflicting information between this document and the officially adopted codes and ordinances, the provisions of the codes and ordinances shall be followed.

Permits issued shall be construed to be a license to proceed with the work and not as authority to violate, cancel, alter or set aside any of the provisions of the codes or ordinances, nor shall issuance of the permit prevent the building official from thereafter requiring a correction of errors in plans, construction or violations of the codes or ordinances of Knox County or any applicable provisions of State or Federal laws.

Please feel free to call any of the offices involved if you have questions regarding procedures, ordinances, codes, or other related subjects.

