Safety Codes Council

In light of the COVID-19 concerns, the Safety Codes Council is taking precautions and adjusting business practices to accommodate our clients. For the latest update on these activities, visit our website.

The Council will support a flexible approach to completing mandatory inspections detailed in an accredited municipality's QMP or the Alberta Safety Codes Authority's SRM for agencies. Accredited organizations should adopt a risk based approach to the delivery of safety codes services and the fulfilment of their responsibilities that recognizes the current environment created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Inspections should be prioritized based on urgency (such as utilities connections or occupancy permits). Accredited agencies, corporations and municipalities should use an abundance of caution towards safety codes inspections and maintaining safety for all those concerned. If an inspection cannot occur due to the health and safety risks associated with it, the Council understands and will accept that determination. It will not result in remedial or corrective action being taken against the accredited organization at a future date. However, accredited organizations should use best efforts to deliver permit and inspection services where possible.

1. Customer interactions:

- Practice social distancing. To do this, we will have all staff work with a separation distance of a minimum of 3 feet or 1 meter
    - Also, all staff are to regularly wipe down their station with a disposable sanitation wipe after every customer interaction
    - Staff are to wash their hands regularly and use hand sanitizer in between washes

2. Inspections:

- Proceed with inspections where it is safe to do so and add precautions, such as

    - Call before you attend a site inspection and ask if anyone has been quarantined, sick, or traveled recently - if yes, delay the inspection
    - Attend the site if no contact by phone, but
        - Ask the same questions as above when arriving on site (the person that was contacted on the phone may not be the persons on site) - again delay if any concerns
    - Reschedule any deferred inspections due to health and safety concerns after the estimated quarantine period.
    - Use AHS guidelines maintaining personal space (social distancing), sanitize (wash hands before / after exiting sites where available), and not touching your face
    - Complete visual inspections and avoid contact with any materials on site
    - Consider deferring or postponing inspections of high-density, multi-family occupancy buildings
    - Enable the Verification of Compliance (VOC) process where possible, using photographs to support compliance
    - Implement "virtual" or "remote" inspections using video conference software/phone apps such as FaceTime, Google Duo, etc.
        - Leverage technology wherever possible to limit risky physical interaction.

    - Utilize physical barriers, such as doors, or windows for conversations when appropriate
    - Take only necessary equipment into the structure to complete the inspection
    - Utilize any additional personal protective equipment as determined by on-site risk assessment, such as gloves, etc.

- Where the Safety Codes Officers are still not comfortable as they approach or enter a site, they have the right of refusal where they deem it unsafe. It is paramount that accredited organizations allow Safety Codes Officers to exercise that option.

3. QMP Compliance: - Accredited Municipalities and Corporations

The Council will support a flexible approach to using best efforts to complete the mandatory inspections detailed in an accredited organization's quality management plan (QMP). The use of alternative approaches to obtain compliance will be supported and not viewed negatively by the Council during a future review of an organization's accreditation. These alternative approaches include the use of photographs, video, virtual real-time inspections (i.e. FaceTime, Skype and Google Duo), or leveraging technology to achieve the same outcome as a physical site inspection. This also includes the use of VOCs with supporting photographs. If an inspection cannot occur due to health and safety concerns, the Council asks that the permit and inspection file contain adequate and clear rationale as to why.

4. ASCA Service Reference Manual:

The Council will support accredited agencies using a flexible approach to completing mandatory inspections detailed in the ASCA Service Reference Manual. ASCA will support the use of photographs, video, and/or virtual real-time inspections to determine compliance. The use of these alternative inspection methods are temporary, will not be flagged as non-compliant during ASCA's review of the issued / inspected permit and should be recorded in eSITE permit notes. As a reminder, accredited agencies can issue a VOC with supporting photographs.

If you have any questions, please contact accreditation@safetycodes.ab.ca or askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca