

City of Norfolk Department of City Planning

Field Inspections During Unusual Conditions or Circumstances

Alert: Coronavirus-Inspection Protocols

Building Inspections

The Division of Building Safety will severely limit onsite inspections from 3/16/20, through 3/30/20 and perhaps beyond depending on the spread of the COVID-19 viral disease. We are accepting Third-Party Inspections, Facetime, Videos, and Pictures under differing circumstances which are detailed below.

Onsite Inspections: New Construction Only

Under certain circumstances an on-site inspection can be conducted at the discretion of the inspector. These will only be done for construction permitted and underway prior to March 16, 2020 and only for final inspections, electrical inspections and gas line inspections. The contractor must schedule the inspection; the inspector will then contact the contractor to give a specific time when s/he will be on site.

There is to be no one, other than the inspector, on site during the inspection.

This is non-negotiable. All plans and other required documents are to be left on site for the inspector. If the inspector arrives and there are persons on site, s/he must leave, and the contractor must re-schedule the inspection. There will be a reinspection fee assessed should this occur.

Accepting Photographs, Video, and FaceTime:

Once the contractor requests an inspection other than new construction final inspections, electrical re-connects and gas line inspections, the inspector will contact the contractor to discuss the option of a remote inspection. Pictures and videos must be clear, concise, and viewable from all viewpoints. Pictures shall be signed by contractor, dated with the permit number and must include the address of the project. Use of FaceTime where the inspector and contractor can interact and together observe items to be inspected will be encouraged. All inspection results are the discretion of the inspector.

Third-Party Inspections

While our normal and customary practice is that third party inspections are the exception and not routine practice, during the period when we are responding to COVID-19, we will accept third-party inspections as a routine practice.

The contractor is responsible for finding and hiring a third-party inspector or agency. They must be approved by the Building Commissioner prior to conducting any inspections. Applications and forms are located on the city website

[https://www.norfolk.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1467/3rd_party_statement-Third-Party-Statement-of-Inspections?bidId=]. The application must be completed and emailed to the Building Commissioner for approval. Approval of third-party inspectors or agencies will be based on their qualifications as outlined below:

- A. They may not have a direct relationship with the project
- B. Inspection personnel must be approved in advance and be experienced in the aspect of construction or trade to be inspected and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Certified by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
2. Certified by the International Code Council or possess other approved National Certification
3. Virginia professional registration (RDP)
4. Possess related trade experience, education and any other factors that would demonstrate competency and reliability to conduct inspections approved by the Building Commissioner.

Third-party inspectors will be required to submit a report of the inspection, either approved or denied, to the Building Commissioner within 5 working days, in the form of a completed Third-Party Inspection Statement Form that quantifies and details the type of inspection performed and any limits of construction work inspected. Certification of the inspection by the third-party inspector will be in accordance with the approved plans and the current applicable edition of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Design Review Inspections

Design review inspections will follow the same protocols listed above. Remote inspections will be preferred, at the discretion of the inspector. Third-party design review inspections will not be required.

Certificate of Occupancy Inspections

It may be difficult for each operating department's inspectors to complete their inspections. Given that, a temporary certificate of occupancy may be issued as soon as final building inspections are approved. TCO fees will be waived during this time period.

Environmental Services Inspections

E&S & VSMP CGP Required DEQ Bi-Monthly & rainfall inspections on all active construction sites.

A majority of E&S inspections can be completed by a visual inspection from City vehicle or utilizing FaceTime or pictures that can be verified by date stamp. Inspectors will only leave their vehicle when no one is onsite which will require advance notice given to the general contractor or owner. E&S reports will be emailed directly to project superintendent or RLD for signature which will be emailed back for file. For new projects all preconstruction paperwork normally handled in person will be emailed to contractor to be signed and emailed back. Once controls are established an inspection time will be set up so the inspector can do a visual inspection from vehicle if possible. If visual inspection from vehicle is not feasible because of site constraints the inspector will coordinate with the general contractor so the site can be accessed with no other personnel present.

Single Family E&S

Normal Bi-monthly inspections will be conducted from vehicle. For CO final- FaceTime (if compatible)/ pictures (look at timestamp) by email if available showing rain barrels, required landscaping, and stabilization. If FaceTime or current condition pictures not available a call will be made to general contractor or owner requesting access with no other personnel present. All required approvals or permits will be completed by email and signed off in BasicGov system.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CBPA)

Review for single family homes, additions, accessory structures or CBPA tree permits can, in certain circumstances, be completed by utilizing newest aerial photography on Pictometry or having the homeowner or contractor stake out the proposed structure and sending pictures. Some CBPA reviews including providing wetland delineations and issuing permits for CBPA tree removal, reviewing CBPA plantings for CO's will require access to back yards. In these cases, a call will be made to contractor or homeowner requesting access to property with no one present outside. Once assessments are made all required approvals or permits will be completed by email and signed off in BasicGov system by staff.

Wetland Permits

Review of wetland permits in some instances can be completed by utilizing newest aerial photography on Pictometry or having the owner or contractor stake out the proposed structure and sending pictures. Some wetland permit reviews will require access to back yards or marine industrial facilities—in these cases a call will be made to contractor or owner requesting access to property with no one present outside. All signoffs will be completed by emails to VMRC and owners and then put into BasicGov system. Certain wetland permits will require authorization from the Norfolk Wetland Board which is currently scheduled to meet no earlier than May 13th, 2020.