Code Enforcement

Objective:

Keep people safe in their homes and communities

Strategy:

Enforce building and land-use codes in unincorporated areas

Why is this strategy important?

Building and land use codes are developed and enforced to protect public health, keep individuals safe, and protect the environment for our communities. The permitting process ensures that buildings are structurally sound, zoning requirements are followed, and that the effects of natural disasters are mitigated.

King County's Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER) takes a community-oriented approach to preserving the safety of our communities and natural resources. Staff work in partnership with local communities to establish code enforcement priorities and to communicate about local Code Enforcement efforts.

How is our performance?

King County Code Enforcement responds to code complaints within 7 days most of the time, although environmental hazards and other high priority cases are investigated as quickly as possible, usually within 48 hours.

Some violations are quick to resolve, while others take more time due to their complexity. Code Enforcement Officers work with property owners in an attempt to educate them about the specific code requirements which apply to their property. The first priority is always to achieve voluntary compliance with County codes.

The Building Code Effectiveness Grade (BCEG) assesses the building codes in effect in a particular community and how the community enforces its building codes, with special emphasis on mitigation of losses from natural hazards. The program assigns each municipality a grade of 1 (exemplary commitment to building-code enforcement) to 10.

The BCEG affects insurance rates in an area, because jurisdictions with well-enforced, up-to-date codes should have fewer insurance claims. King County has worked hard to achieve a high BCEG, moving from a grade of 4 in 2007 to 3 in 2002 and 2010.

Fire fatalities have remained relatively low over the last 10 years, with most building fatalities related to household accidents including kitchen fires and misplaced cigarettes. The Department

of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER) is responsible for administering and enforcing the provisions of the International Fire Code in all new and existing buildings in unincorporated King County.

Moving forward

King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review's (DPER) mission is to serve, educate and protect our community by shaping and implementing King County's development and environmental regulations. King County will continue to emphasize timely customer service and quality code compliance in order to protect the health of individuals and our community.

A key part of meeting our customer service mission is providing online access to permitting and code enforcement resources. Right now anyone can use the King County Citizen Permitting Portal to:

- Submit a code enforcement complaint

- Search in-progress permits or complaints

- Export data from searches

- View the workflow with comments in context

- View past inspections

- View related records to a permit or code complaint, based on privacy permissions

In addition, DPER is working with local Fire Districts to develop inspections for commercial buildings and the public spaces of multifamily structures. These locally-led and conducted inspections will result in timely and community-oriented services, with the intent of keeping and lowering preventable fire fatalities. This program has proved successful, with participating districts working locally and providing annual reports to King County for monitoring and quality assurance.

Related Links

King County Citizen Permitting Portal

Department of Permitting and Environmental Review

Technical Notes

Data for Code Enforcement Response time map and table provided by King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review and includes high priority building code enforcement cases opened between 1/1/2005 and 12/31/2011. Response time is days between case opening and first inspection date.

Charts and Maps.

Building Code Complaints with Response Under 7 Days

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
East	78%	76%	81%	74%	77%
South	66%	62%	73%	69%	66%
Vashon	68%	48%	53%	88%	60%
Total	70%	66%	75%	72%	70%

Data Source: Department of Permitting and Environmental Review

Unincorporated King County Building Code Effectiveness Grade

	Grade/Rating
1997	4.0
2002	3.0
2010	3.0

Data Source: Department of Permitting and Environmental Review

Building-Related Fire Fatalities in Unincorporated King County

January 2002–June 2012

	Household Accident	Unknown Cause	Total
2002			0
2003	2		2
2004			0
2005	1	1	2
2006		1	1
2007			0
2008		1	1
2009	1		1
2010	2		2
2011			0
2012			0

Data Source: Department of Permitting and Environmental Review

Percent of High Risk Code Enforcement Complaints With 7 Day Response

King County Code Enforcement Service Area, 2008 - 2011

Data Source: Department of Permitting and Environmental Review

- 14.29% - 42.86%
- 42.87% - 62.5%
- 62.51% - 77.78%
- 77.79% - 88.89%
- 88.9% - 100%
- No Data

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3.5 1.75 0 3.5
Miles

Date: December 20, 2012

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