

## Code Enforcement Terminology

### Violation Letters

Violation letters are Code Enforcement's initial means of contacting potential code violators. There are a few different versions:

- Violation 1 letters are sent by Code Enforcement within 30 days of receiving a complaint.
- Violation 2 letters are sent after a violation(s) has been confirmed.
- Violation 3 letters are sent to document an informal compliance agreement between Code Enforcement and the property owner.

### Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA)

After a Code Enforcement Officer has confirmed a violation, the property owner can work out an agreement with Code Enforcement to bring the property into compliance. This agreement is recorded on the title of the property.

### Notice and Order (N&O)

These documents give a legal description of the violations and set compliance deadlines. Notice and Orders are issued only after Violation Letters and collaboration with a Code Enforcement Officer have failed to bring a property into voluntarily compliance.

### Appeal

After a Notice and Order has been issued, every property owner has the right to appeal the violations confirmed on the property. The appeal is heard by a King County Hearing Examiner. If the appeal is upheld, the Notice and Order is dismissed and a Certificate of Compliance is issued. If the appeal is denied, the property owner is given a new mandatory compliance schedule. If that schedule is not met, assessment of civil penalties begins.

## Code Enforcement Terminology, Cont.

### Civil Penalties

If a property remains out of compliance with the code past the deadlines outlined in a Notice and Order, or VCA, the property owner starts incurring daily penalties. The amounts depend on the specific violations and are included in the Notice and Order or VCA. The fines accumulate every day the property remains in violation up to a maximum of 60 days. The daily fine amount doubles for the final 30 days. If civil penalties are not paid in a timely manner, the county will obtain a lien against the subject property. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office may also obtain a civil judgment.

### Abatement

If there is no compliance after a Notice and Order or VCA and Civil Penalties, King County has the right to bring the property into compliance. Abatement means that the county brings the property into compliance and the expense is transferred to the property owner. In most cases, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office will obtain a Superior Court Order prior to county representatives entering private property.

### Certificate of Compliance

Code compliance is the main objective of the Code Enforcement process. A Certificate of Compliance is issued whenever a property owner corrects all code violations cited in the N&O or VCA. Compliance can be achieved at virtually any time by the property owner. A Certificate of Compliance closes the case and ends the enforcement process. Civil penalties may still be due.

King County Department of Permitting  
and Environmental Review  
Code Enforcement Section  
35030 SE Douglas Street, Suite 210  
Snoqualmie, WA 98065-9266  
DPER Customer Service: 206-296-6600  
Code Enforcement Section Message Line: 206-296-6680

# Working with Code Enforcement on Your Property



**King County**

## What is Code Enforcement?

King County Code Enforcement is a function within the Department of **Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER)** that enforces building and land use regulations set forth in King County Code. Code Enforcement officers investigate complaints of unlawful and hazardous development and uses on private property. Code Enforcement responds to reported code violations associated with zoning, housing and building, shorelines, and critical areas. The Code Enforcement workload is almost entirely driven by the complaints of private citizens; Code Enforcement Officers do not proactively survey the county looking for violations.

If, as a property owner, you have been contacted by King County Code Enforcement because of a violation in any of the aforementioned areas, it is important for you to understand the Code Enforcement process. This pamphlet outlines that process, and also explains your choices and opportunities as a property owner.

This pamphlet also outlines all the potential steps in the life-cycle of a code enforcement case. It is important to understand that property owners may correct the violation at any given point in the process and therefore resolve the case. The first priority and preference of code enforcement officers is to work in partnership with a property owner in the earliest stages of the code enforcement process in order to bring a property into compliance with the pertinent code(s).

## How Does Code Enforcement Benefit the Community?

- Ensures safe living conditions.
- Safeguards the environment, protecting people, wildlife, and livestock.
- Keeps land free from garbage.
- Protects neighborhood real estate values from unsightly and unsafe environmental destruction and accumulation of junk vehicles.

I Have Received  
a Violation 1 Letter.  
What Happens Next?

### Your Next Actions

Contact your Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) by phone or e-mail. You can find your CEO's contact information at the bottom of the Violation 1 Letter.

### Code Enforcement's Next Actions

If we do not hear from you, a Code Enforcement Officer will make a site visit. The officer will determine if the complaint is valid or not. If it is not, the matter will be closed. If the complaint is valid, we will work with you to bring your property into compliance.

### How to Contact Code Enforcement

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## The Code Enforcement Process and Opportunities for Compliance

### Complaint

- Code enforcement (CE) receives a complaint

### Knowledge

- Code enforcement sends first violation letter & contacts property owner (PO)

### Education

- CE will conduct site/parcel investigation
- Inform PO of code and requirements (With no violation the case is closed)

### Voluntary Compliance

- PO can bring property into compliance and end the process (Upon compliance case is closed)

### Compliance Deadlines

- CE will send second violation letter with code citation & a compliance schedule (Upon compliance case is closed)

### Legal Notice

- Without compliance, CE will send Notice and Order to PO
- PO can appeal to Hearing Examiner (Upon compliance case is closed)

### Appeal (Optional)

- Appeal granted and case closed
- Or
- Appeal denied and PO given new compliance schedule

### Civil Penalties

- Up to 60 days of compounding civil penalties (Upon compliance penalties stop compounding and case is closed)

### Prosecutorial Referral

- Strive for compliance with added legal pressure, including obtaining civil judgment against PO

### Abatement

- Without compliance the county can bring property into compliance
- Cost is recovered with lien against property