



City of Portsmouth Department of
Permits and Inspections

Public Memo

From: Douglas K. Smith, MCP; Building/Code Official
Re: COVID 19 OPERATING PROTOCOLS

The following protocols are enacted in an effort to provide the best, most effective and efficient service delivery possible while maintaining public and staff safety during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Administrative Functions

- Accept and process permit applications and construction documents via drop box (located outside City Hall), email, regular mail, and delivery service. Two sets of hard paper copies of construction documents are required for certain plan examinations and prior to permit issuance. Hard paper copies of applications and documents are subject to a 24 hour quarantine after received.
- Perform plan examination with limited personnel
- Answer telephones and emails, respond to inquiries, provide information, and process permits with limited staff on a shift basis
- Accept payment via drop box, mail, or delivery by check or via phone by credit card

Construction Inspections

The Department is conducting all new commercial and residential construction inspections. However, staff health and safety are paramount. Generally, the Department is not conducting any type of inspection on properties where people (owners, contractors, tenants, and others) are occupying the space. A contractor or other building representative may accompany the inspector on the inspection provided they are wearing proper personal protective equipment to include masks, gloves, glasses, etc. The inspector reserves the right to refuse to conduct any inspection where they feel their safety may be compromised. Due to our current workload and personnel shortages, the inspector will not wait on site while the contractor vacates the property or corrects any inspection deficiencies.

Our third party inspection policy and procedure is an acceptable option for new construction inspections, provided the Department grants advance approval. Please refer to our policy under the forms tab on our web site.

Commercial Reinspections

The Department is conducting commercial reinspections in accordance with our Commercial Reinspection policy and procedure. However, the Department is not conducting any type of inspection on properties where people (owners, contractors, tenants, and others) are occupying the space. This should not be an issue since commercial reinspection are only required when a property has been vacant for 90 days or more. A building representative may accompany the inspector on the inspection provided they are wearing proper personal protective equipment to include masks, gloves, glasses, etc. The inspector reserves the right to refuse to conduct any inspection where they feel their safety may be compromised.

Property Maintenance Inspections

Property Maintenance Inspections are limited to exterior inspections and rental inspections. Personnel will respond to citizen inquiries regarding these issues as well. However, staff health and safety are paramount. Generally, the Department is not conducting any type of inspection on properties where people (owners, contractors, tenants, and others) are occupying the space. During a rental inspection, a building representative may accompany the inspector on the inspection provided they are wearing proper personal protective equipment to include masks, gloves, glasses, etc. The inspector reserves the right to refuse to conduct any inspection where they feel their safety may be compromised. Due to our current workload and personnel shortages, the inspector will not wait while the property is vacated or any inspection deficiencies are corrected.

Why are we operating in this way?

As stated above, the Department is attempting to provide the best, most effective and efficient service delivery possible while maintaining public and staff safety during the COVID 19 pandemic. Conducting inspections requires personnel to enter environments where COVID-19 may exist. We are attempting to find a reasonable balance between public and staff safety and service delivery during unprecedented times. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation while we work through this pandemic.

Please be patient and expect delays. These services are subject to change with little or no advance notice.