



Guidance for Inspections Customers (effective March 25, 2020)

The county has enacted additional restrictions on movement and the operations of business in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. During these critical times, we are committed to meeting the demand of the construction industry, while protecting the health and safety of our customers, staff and the community we serve.

Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement stands ready to meet customers' inspections needs as long as they are legally allowed to maintain operations. As part of meeting that need while protecting customers and staff, with the support of the N.C. Department of Insurance, we will temporarily be increasing our use of Live Remote inspections (LRI). LRIs are inspections that are conducted via "video chat" with a contractor onsite.

Effective March 26, 2020, all inspections in occupied residential units (including single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, individual apartment units, condo units, etc.) **will only be inspected via LRI.**

We will also leverage the LRI process on other inspections if the contractor, inspector or any other parties are at a higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19. LRI will be available for all inspections **except the following:**

- First-time framing inspections for wood-framed structures
- First-time electrical rough inspections
- Temporary power/temporary utility connections
- Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) inspections (available only for commercial projects)
- Final inspections for occupancy approval

If an inspector determines during an LRI that the complexity of an inspection, poor reception or visibility requires an in-person inspection, we will ask that the work area be vacated and the inspector will walk the project alone. This is being done solely to maintain social distancing protocols.

In order to meet your inspections needs, our Inspectors will use Google Duo to perform live video inspections of your projects. **We also ask that when submitting your inspection request, that you note you are requesting LRI in the comments and include a phone number the inspector can use to initiate the video call.**

Our inspectors will still send an auto-notification when your inspection will be performed within the upcoming hour. For LRI, this notification will alert you to be at the project within one hour with the phone number included for the LRI.

The inspector will request that you start at a street sign in order to confirm the proper location. From there you will be asked to show the building entrance along with the address clearly visible. From there, the inspector will ask you to move about the work to be inspected.

Once complete, the inspector will terminate the call and inspections results will be entered as normal. All inspections results – pass, fail, partial approval, etc., will have the note added “LIVE REMOTE INSPECTION”.

Staff will make every effort to provide a complete inspection, as we normally do for in-person inspections. However, as with in-person inspections, it remains the contractor’s ultimate responsibility to provide a code-compliant project (N.C. Administrative Code and Policies – Section 204.5.1).

For Inspections not Eligible for LRI

First-time framing inspections for wood-framed structures, first-time electrical rough inspections, Temporary power/temporary utility connections, TCO inspections (available only for commercial projects), and final inspections for occupancy approval will continue to be performed in-person. However, we ask that the work area to be inspected be cleared of occupants or construction personnel and staff except for those needed for testing of any systems. Any personnel needed to be in attendance will be asked the following questions prior to initiating the inspection:

1. Do you or anyone at the home or project site have any of the following symptoms: fever, cough, difficulty breathing?
2. Have you or others in your home had known close contact to someone with COVID-19?
3. Have you or others in your home travelled outside the country within the past 14 days?

Countries that have a Level 3 Travel Health Notice can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>

If the answers to all three questions are “no”, then we will proceed with the inspection with the project vacant or, if assistance is needed, while exercising social distancing per CDC guidelines. If the answer to any of the 3 questions is “yes”, then the inspection will be marked as inaccessible without a chargeable failure and the inspection request will need to be resubmitted after 14 days and symptoms have resolved (if applicable).

Residential framing inspections for remodel/addition projects that did not require the homeowner to vacate the home will be handled as Live Remote Inspections.

A Note on Third-Party Inspections

Third-party inspections are an option if the **owner** of a project wishes to use that option. However, it is subject to the approval of the director of Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement and it requires a contract with Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement. The Third-Party Inspector must complete the same training and pass the same North Carolina State certification exams as all inspectors employed by Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ’s). Code Enforcement believes that staff can meet the needs of our customers without leveraging Third-Party Inspections. Additionally, if projects are forced to shut down by the local, state, or federal Governments, any inspections performed by Third-Party Inspectors during the work shutdown, will not be allowable as meeting code compliance.

We understand that we are all in this together, while needing to remain apart for now. Our hope is that these guidelines will help us all continue to operate our businesses while we are legally authorized to do so and to make vital contributions to our local economy.