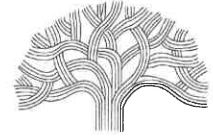


# CITY OF OAKLAND



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Planning and Building Department  
Office of the Director

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December 5, 2018

Dear Stakeholders,

As you are aware, Oakland is experiencing an unprecedented construction boom. Consequently, the Planning & Building Department (PBD) is experiencing a corresponding demand in the permit applications and inspection requests. In the past, applicants could request an inspection and typically receive a next-day appointment in most instances. However, reliably maintaining this turnaround time in the current construction market has not been possible given both the sheer volume of demand and past practices of allowing permit holders to schedule unlimited inspections and cancelling them on the scheduled day, which reduced available appointments for permit-holders who were actually ready for inspection.

Therefore, we are making changes to our current Building Inspection scheduling procedures **effective January 1, 2019**. Please read below for details and next steps:

Past practice allowed project permit-holders to:

1. Request unlimited inspection appointments *months in advance of actual need*; and
2. Cancel those same appointments *within a few days or on the same day* of the pre-scheduled appointments.

The combination of these practices has blocked the opportunity for permit-holders who are actually ready for inspections to make appointments because these current practices make inspectors unavailable for real-time inspection needs. Given the unprecedented volume of inspections, these practices have caused an extreme backlog in inspection scheduling.

## **New Policies/Procedures**

For inspectors to be more available to meet demands more efficiently, the following new procedures will be implemented on January 1, 2019:

### **1. Inspection Limits for projects:**

- a. 30 floors and above: 500 inspections
- b. 8-30 floors: 450 inspections
- c. 5-7 floors: 300 inspections
- d. 3-5 floors: 200 inspections
- e. 1-3 floors: 75 inspections

2. **Advance Scheduling:** Inspections will be scheduled no more than one month in advance.

3. **Weekly Inspection Limit:** A maximum of three inspections per permit/trade are allowed per week, which includes cancellations.
4. **Appointment Confirmation:** The Building Bureau will contact the applicant 48 hours in advance of the scheduled inspection to confirmed readiness for the inspection. If confirmation is not received 48 hours prior to the inspection, the appointment will be canceled.
5. **Inspection Length:** Inspections are currently scheduled for a maximum of 20 minutes. If an applicant requires an inspection to be longer than 20 minutes, the applicant must schedule an appointment via email with one of the Senior Inspectors, Dave Velez, at [dvelez@oaklandca.gov](mailto:dvelez@oaklandca.gov) or Rodolfo Dueñas, at [rduenas@oaklandca.gov](mailto:rduenas@oaklandca.gov).
6. **Waitlist** An applicant can call the Permit Hotline at (510) 238-3444 and request to be placed on the 24-48 hour waitlist: if the applicant is ready for electrical service release, gas service release, has a scheduled concrete pour, stabilization of slopes, or is missing residential trade inspections when a building permit is scheduled and an inspection is required within 24-48 hours and there are not current openings for an inspection. The applicant will have to provide details pertaining to the need for the urgent situation. The Senior Inspectors will review request and follow-up with the applicant if more information is required.
7. **Applicant and Job Site Readiness Criteria:** In order to ensure that both permit-holders' and inspectors' time is efficiently allocated to all, we request the following:
  - a. The permit-holder's onsite contact-person shall be ready to receive an arrival call from the inspector and be present in a prearranged location
  - b. The onsite contact-person shall have approved plans for inspection (reduced copy of approved set or PDF of approved set on tablet are acceptable)
  - c. The onsite contact-person shall have job card or inspection field notebook during inspection
  - d. The onsite contact-person shall complete all previous corrections/revisions if any were required during previous inspections
  - e. Inspection areas shall be accessible, clear of obstacles, and clean of debris
  - f. Areas shall be illuminated
  - g. In multi-story structures with available elevators, use shall be prioritized for inspections in order to access areas promptly
  - h. Electrical, plumbing, mechanical and fire systems shall be approved by the City's trade inspectors before building inspections for the entire building or portion of a building.
  - i. The permit-holder's *Special Inspections* and *Engineer Observations* must be performed and field notes or daily reports presented to inspector before inspection
  - j. Seismic Force Resistive Systems must be field-labeled (shear walls: shear wall type, edge and field nailing schedule) hold-downs, clips, straps, strong backs marked with highly visible paint
  - k. Inspections shall be arranged wherever possible for "localized" areas (i.e., per floor, assemblies or systems, shaft, wing, exterior only or other logical demarcation, or other distinct area) to maximize available inspection time.
  - l. Whenever practicable, a designated parking area for inspectors shall be provided.

Any exceptions to the above procedures will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Request for accommodations should be submitted via email to Tim Low, Acting Building Official, at [tlow@oaklandca.gov](mailto:tlow@oaklandca.gov).

### **Taking Additional Steps**

The following are other measures the Planning and Building Department is undertaking to address backlog and reduce scheduling wait times:

1. Increasing the number of overtime inspections offered.
2. Hiring and training 11 new inspectors. To date seven (7) inspectors have started working for the Department and are currently undergoing on-the-job training. One more is scheduled to report for work in the next week.
3. Executing a cooperative agreement to utilize San Leandro's On-Call Inspection Contract.
4. Issuing an RFP for on-call-inspection services.
5. Piloting virtual inspections for cell-sites and solar panel installations.
6. Tracking data from permit applications to forecast future inspection demands as permitted projects move into construction phases upon city approval.

To put the current situation in historical context, note that between January 1, 2017 and September 18, 2017, the Building Bureau conducted 34,778 building inspections and 5,835 code enforcement inspections. For the same time period this year, January 1 - September 18, 2018, the Bureau conducted 41,227 building inspections and 7,609 code enforcement inspections; this is an increase of over 7,000 inspections.

We are confident that these new policies and procedures will contribute to a more effective and efficient process for all applicants. Of course, we need and will benefit from your feedback on the effectiveness of these measures and on any additional suggestions you might have. Please reach out to Katie Dignan, Assistant Director, at [kdignan@oaklandca.gov](mailto:kdignan@oaklandca.gov) with comments or questions.

Respectfully,



William A. Gilchrist  
Director, Planning & Building Department