

From the Office of Code Enforcement

City of
Indianapolis
Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor



City Introduces New Pre-permit Plan Review Process for Class 1 Structures

Another step in a series of improvements to enhance building safety, hold down insurance rates

Effective November 1, 2009, the Office of Code Enforcement (OCE) will require all building plans for Class 1 Structures (commercial, industrial, and multi-family) to be thoroughly reviewed prior to receiving a building permit – a standard practice in most cities and states. Currently, permit approval is based on a Construction Design Release issued by the State and a completed application to the City. Plan review is then initiated by the permit approval, and any corrections required after construction can pose increased building costs and safety concerns.

“Requiring a thorough pre-permit plan review will help prevent potential building violations that we commonly find in the field,” said Rick Powers, Director of the Office of Code Enforcement. “Our Building Code Analysts are trained to ensure that building codes are followed, and when items are identified and addressed prior to construction, it will increase safety and save the building industry both time and money.”

How will the plan review process change?

To begin the review process, plans must meet the minimum requirements for submission, and incomplete applications will not be accepted. Applicants are also encouraged to provide any additional information that is unique to the project. Since the charge for plan review will be based on a flat fee and an hourly rate for additional review time, a more complete and accurate submittal could save not only time, but money.

Although OCE cannot approve a project until a Construction Design Release is issued by the State, the City can begin its plan review at any time. Professionals are encouraged to submit plans as early as possible and concurrently with their State submittal to minimize additional wait time. Due to the fluctuation of work flow and the complexity and size of projects, OCE cannot guarantee a turnaround time but anticipates completing an initial plan review within 15-20 business days.

What are the minimum requirements for a submittal?

A submittal must include a completed permit application and four (4) copies of building plans that meet the following minimum requirements:

- The area and scope of work shall be clearly indicated on the plans
- All plans shall be numbered and an index shall be furnished on the cover sheet
- Address of the project shall be on the plans
- All plans shall be drawn to scale
- Site plan
- Foundation/basement plan
- Detailed/dimensioned floor plan(s)
- Wall elevations
- Sections and details for walls
- Floor details
- Roof details
- Electrical plans
- Mechanical plans
- Plumbing plans
- Specification manual
- Automatic fire-extinguishing systems
- Fire detection and alarm systems

“Since 1986, the Mayor’s Construction Action Team has worked effectively with the City of Indianapolis to promote efficient services for permit fee users. The Office of Code Enforcement’s new plan review process for Class 1 Structure building permits is a benchmark for cities around the nation. It promotes cooperation, convenience, and compliance without creating an adversarial relationship with its users. The beauty is in its simplicity in that it is a truly user-focused system that continues to promote the health and safety of the citizens of Indianapolis.”

Denny Smith, Chairman, Mayor’s
Construction Action Team.

Why is the pre-permit plan review important?

Requiring plan review and corrections prior to permit issuance is part of a series of improvements that have been implemented in response to a 2003 audit conducted by the Insurance Services Office (ISO). ISO analyzed the City's administration of codes, plan review, and field inspections to issue a rating that is used by insurance companies to formulate premiums – an indicator of the City's investment in building safety.

Three areas were cited in the 2003 ISO audit as needing improvement, and they included:

- Lack of a detailed structural building code plan review for commercial, industrial, and multi-family properties
- Inspection rates
- Training for building inspectors

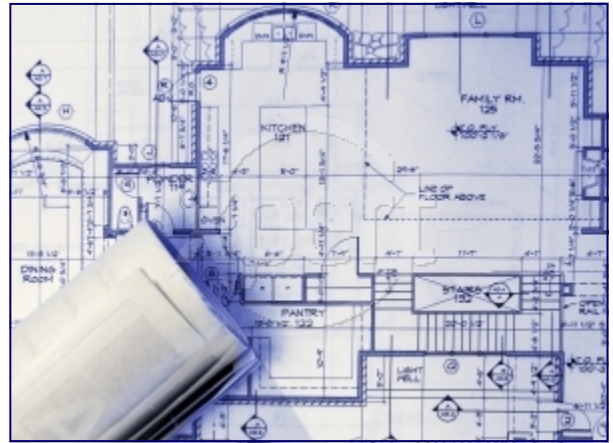
Over the past three years, proactive measures have been taken in the City's building division to increase inspection rates and inspector qualifications by more than doubling the number of building inspectors from 10 to 24, increasing inspection rates from 30% to nearly 100%, and mandating a rigorous inspector training program by requiring inspectors to obtain eight certifications (structural and trade certifications for both residential and commercial) within four years. The pre-permit plan review is an essential component to a comprehensive building review and another step in improving building safety and the City's insurance rating.

What is the next step in building safety?

The next logical step in building safety is to require a certificate of occupancy (CO) - a national standard and a positive influence on insurance rates – which signifies that a property has gone through the required plan submittal, review, and inspection processes, and is safe to occupy. In the near future, the City will require a CO for residential properties and will phase-in the requirement for non-residential properties based on the progress of implementing the residential CO.

How do these changes benefit the public?

- Provides a professional and knowledgeable City staff to assist the design and building community in following building codes
- Saves building industry time and money by catching violations prior to construction
- Administers detailed plan review and inspections to promote good development and safer, quality structures
- Offers better government oversight to improve ISO rating which can mitigate insurance rate increases and help them plateau, if not decrease
- Gives property owners a feeling of security in their structure and in their investment



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long will it take for my plan review to be conducted?

A: Review time will vary based on project. We strive to have the initial review for a project completed within 15-20 business days.

Q: How much will the plan review cost?

A: The review fee is based on the amount of time the project takes to review. Each project is different, but providing complete and precise plans will eliminate additional time and fees spent in the review process.

Q: Can I submit plans for review at the same time I submit for a Construction Design Release?

A: Yes, and we encourage this to minimize additional wait time.

Q: Is there an expedited review process?

A: No. We currently do not offer an expedited review. All projects are reviewed in the order in which they are submitted.

Q: If I am missing any information in my submittal, can I still get in queue for plan review.

A: No. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

OFFICE OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

Putting public safety and quality of life issues first through efficient and effective:

- LICENSING
- PERMITTING
- INSPECTIONS
- ABATEMENT

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For a complete list of services and resources, visit www.indy.gov/oce or contact us via:

LOBBY HOURS:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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Friday
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**1200 Madison Ave., Suite 100
Indianapolis, IN 46225
Phone: (317) 327-8700
Fax: (317) 327-8696
www.indy.gov/oce**

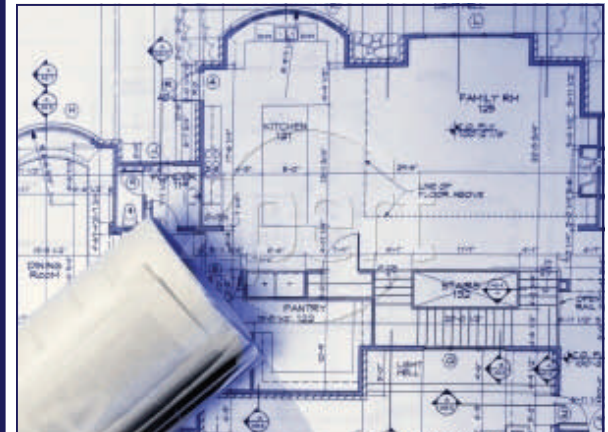


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OFFICE OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

PRE-PERMIT PLAN REVIEW **FOR CLASS 1** **STRUCTURES**



Effective November 1, 2009, all building plans for Class 1 Structures (commercial, industrial, and multi-family) must be thoroughly reviewed prior to receiving a building permit.

Incorporate Pre-permit Plan Review into Your Project

- **Build plan review into your timeline.** Plan review varies with each project, but our goal is to complete an initial review within 15-20 business days.
- **Adjust your budget.** An hourly rate will be charged for additional review time.
- **Be detailed.** Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Minimum requirements are essential to start the process, but including additional detail may save you additional time and money on plan review.

Who Can Apply

Anyone can submit plans; however, the permit must be issued in the name of an authorized agent of a licensed contractor, a registered architect/engineer, or a property owner.

General Requirements

- A building permit application shall be completed in its entirety and shall accompany each submittal for review (minimum one (1) permit per building). Permit applications will NOT be accepted until complete.
- All documents requiring a Design Professional of record shall be dated and signed by the designer. Professional seals, when required, shall appear on all sheets and be signed and dated by the designer.
- The minimum size architectural scale permitted on submitted drawings for review is 1/8" per foot except site plans.
- The minimum size architectural scale of details on drawings shall be 1/4" per foot.
- Four (4) complete sets of plans must be submitted with each application.

Minimum Requirements for Submittal

- The area and scope of work shall be clearly indicated on the plans
- All plans shall be numbered and an index shall be furnished on the cover sheet
- Address of the project shall be on the plans
- All plans shall be drawn to scale
- Site plan
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Avoid Top 10 Plan Review Violations

1. Incomplete plan content
2. Design professional seal and signature
3. Accessibility (Egress, Door Swing, Ramps, Aisle Width, Restroom Details, Accessible Parking, Accessible Route)
4. Design for fire-resistive-rated construction
5. Egress/emergency lighting
6. Occupancy separations
7. Fire rating of building elements
8. Inadequate exiting and exit signage
9. Grounding electrode system
10. Minimum plumbing fixtures

Tips to Expedite Plan Review

- Submit your plan review at the same time you submit for a Construction Design Release.
- Provide a detailed code summary on the plans or with your plan submittal.
- Use the self-gatekeeper checklist to ensure that all required plans have been included prior to submitting the project for review.
- When a plan correction is required, provide a precise written statement of how and where the correction was made and clearly indicate all corrections on the plans.
- Respond quickly to any question or comments from your plan reviewer.

Plan Review Time

Due to the fluctuation of work flow and the complexity and size of projects, OCE can not guarantee a turnaround time but anticipates an initial review to be completed within 15-20 business days.

Fees

Fees are based on a flat fee and an hourly rate for additional review time. Fees must be paid in full to receive your permit.

How to Apply

1. **Walk-in Lobby.** Drop off completed application (available online) and four (4) sets of building plans during lobby hours.
2. **On-line** (remodels only). Submit application and building plans online at www.indygov.biz.