



COLLIN COUNTY

Fire Marshal's Office
4690 Community
Suite 200
McKinney, Texas 75071
972-548-5576
975-548-5574 fax
www.collincountytexas.gov

7/15/2019

Re: Commercial Plumbing and Electrical Inspections

Honorable Court,

Commercial construction permits and inspections were recently moved from Development Services to the Fire Marshal's office in an effort to streamline the process as we move forward in implementing the new *Energov* system. Commercial construction for fire code compliance is a function of the Fire Marshal. Plumbing, Electrical and Framing inspections along with the associated permit is handled by Development Services since they also handle residential construction.

Several years ago, a provision in state law made it possible to accept third-party inspections for residential construction. As a result, the county down-sized staff and began accepting third-party inspections for residential but continued doing electrical, plumbing and framing inspections for commercial construction with the use of a contract inspector during evening hours. However, transfer of this function to the Fire Marshal's Office eliminated the need for the contract inspector, as we have the staff and additional certifications to do inspections during the day.

A recent poll of 7 large counties in the state that have an adopted code to examine which permits and inspections were being required for commercial construction showed this:

- All counties polled are permitting and inspecting for fire code compliance.
- Two counties -- Bexar and Tarrant -- are requiring third-party inspections for plumbing and electrical work.
- Fort Bend, Harris, Travis, Dallas and Denton counties do not require permits or inspections for general plumbing and electrical work. They do look for open junction boxes, exposed wiring, venting hazards, etc., as these deficiencies are found in the fire code and could be fire hazards.

The Texas Local Government Code allows a county to adopt a fire code, and Collin County is currently under the 2009 International Fire Code. Permitting and inspections are done to ensure compliance with that fire code. However, plumbing and electrical work in the unincorporated areas are regulated by independent agencies outside of county government. For example, the overall electrical power grid to the private electric meter is the responsibility of the power provider; the water infrastructure to the private water meter is the responsibility of the water purveyor.

It is my recommendation that Collin County cease the practice of general plumbing and electrical permitting and inspections. They should be handled by their respective agency rules or the power/water company providing service. All fire-related permitting and inspections, including specific electrical, plumbing, gas, etc., found in the fire code which could present a fire hazard, will continue to be inspected by the Fire Marshal's Office. Or, another option would be to require third-party inspections for electrical and plumbing to be performed at the cost of the owner and/or contractor. These inspections would be added to our files upon completion and could be required before a Certificate of Compliance is issued.