

Catawba County Building Services Division

Mission and Commitment to Service

MISSION

The mission of Catawba County Building Services Division is to provide consistent, timely and courteous advice and service to customers, contractors, businesses, homeowners and the general public through the application of the State Building Code. The focus of the Service is to protect public safety by ensuring all buildings are built to code specifications while promoting economic development through a partnership with the building industry.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The operations of the Building Services Division have as its foundation four guiding principles: (1) Protecting the public; (2) Providing the best possible customer service; (3) Promoting economic development; (4) and Ensuring consistency in the application of Codes and treatment of customers.

SERVICE AREA

Service will be provided in all unincorporated areas of Catawba County, and in the jurisdictions of Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Maiden and Newton.

COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

1.) Customers will receive consistent service.

Outcomes

- A. The number of Building Services Officials assigned to a specific project will vary depending on the need, size and complexity of the project** and the level of certification of the available Officials. The number of Officials will range from one (1) for very small residential projects to four (4) for highly complex, large commercial, industrial, and institutional projects. Most projects will have two (2) assigned Officials, each with Level III certification in at least two Building Code disciplines.
- a. Building Services Officials will acquire and maintain two (2) Building Code Certifications, a primary and secondary.
 - b. Building Services Officials will be expected to perform inspections correctly and efficiently up to and including their current level of certification in their primary and secondary disciplines.
 - c. Projects will be assigned the least number of Officials that can provide proficient, consistent, and quality service for each project.
- B. Customers will be provided a Project Manager per project to facilitate Building Code Compliance.** Field Supervisor(s) will serve as or assign project managers, acting as the liaison between the Design Professional, Contractor(s), Owner(s), Client, Building Services, Catawba County, and the North Carolina Department of Insurance.
- C. Regardless of the project size, it will be the Project Manager's goal to assign the same Official(s) throughout the project life.**

- D. Project Managers will facilitate the goal of minimizing the number of different Officials performing inspections on any given project to ensure consistency.**
- E. The Project Manager or the assigned Officials under their direct supervision will issue all approvals, advice, turndowns, and requirements for the project.**
- F. Only the Chief or Assistant Chief Building Services Official will have the authority to act over and in the absence of the Project Manager.**
- G. Building Services staff will assist and provide guidance to customers in attaining building code compliance including, but not limited to, explaining alternatives for achieving compliance.**
 - a. Following any building inspection turndown, upon the customer's request, Building Services staff will inform customers of all known alternative corrective measures available to gain Code compliance.
- H. The Permit Centers will meet customers' needs with an attitude of partnership and public service,** recognizing that a healthy building and development industry is essential to Catawba County's economic vitality.
 - a. Permit Center staff will be professional and courteous.
 - b. The customer at the Permit Center counter will be the staff's priority.
 - c. Permit Center staff will handle phone calls within 5 rings.
 - d. Permit Center staff will assist Clients, Contractors, Businesses, Homeowners, and Citizens in obtaining all types of permits, and with scheduling inspections.
 - e. Permit Center staff will assist Clients, Contractors, Businesses, Homeowners, and Citizens in obtaining answers and solutions to their building related questions and concerns.

- f. Permit Center staff will collect and process fees in a cordial manner.
- I. **With permit issuance, clients will be provided a master list of officials name, office location and mobile telephone numbers.**
- J. **If a Safety Inspection results in plans, specifications and permit acquisition, permit fees will be reduced by the cost of the Safety Inspection.**

2.) Customers will receive timely service.

Outcomes

- A. **The Building Services Division will have two offices with operating hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, at the Catawba County Government Center in Newton and at Hickory City Hall.**
 - a. Building permits can be acquired at either office location.
 - b. Building plan review will be available at both offices.
 - c. Inspections can be scheduled at each location.
 - d. Questions, concerns, complaints, etc., will be handled promptly and courteously at either location.
- B. **Inspections can be scheduled by phone or in person at either of the two offices.**
 - a. Scheduling an inspection by phone (828-465-8399).

Beginning July 1, 2003, when scheduling inspections by phone, clients will be prompted to use the County's Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System

Catawba County uses an interactive voice response system (IVR) that allows clients to call in, at their convenience, to schedule, cancel, inquire, or change the date of an inspection. In addition, they can be transferred to an Official of their choice and/or request faxed project documentation. The IVR service is

offered 24 hours a day. The system greets and allows callers to use a touch-tone phone to enter their response or use its voice recognition feature. The system instructs the client through the process. If at anytime a caller is unsure, they can return to the main menu and speak to a Permit Specialist during working hours. If the IVR system is having internal problems, it will automatically switch to a permit specialist during working hours. This system is designed and intended to offer the citizens and contractors of Catawba County flexible, time saving advantages that are helpful and supportive.

- b. Beginning July 1, 2003, using the IVR system, clients will be able to call for next day inspections through 9:00 PM in the evening, Monday through Friday. Calls after 9:00 PM are automatically scheduled for second day inspections.
 - i. Inspections are scheduled in order of request, first come first served.
 - ii. Catawba County's goal is to offer next day inspections.

- C. All requests for inspection services will be fulfilled within two working days.**
- D. All inquiries will be answered within 24 hours.**
- E. To adhere to Utility Service Provider's 4:00 PM deadline for same day service, unless emergency conditions exist, in order to receive prompt Power Connections, it is the County's goal to provide final inspection by 4:00 pm. Ultimately, it is utility providers responsibility to connect power to approved structure.**
- F. When projects fail final inspection, if, in the opinion of the Building Services Official, failures will not create life threatening situations, a temporary Certificate of Occupancy may be issued. All denials will be reviewed by the Building Services Chief or Assistant Chief for final determination.**

3.) Customers will receive quality service

Outcomes

- A. Catawba County will continually evaluate new methods, opportunities, and means to improve customer service and act accordingly.**
- B. Catawba County will monitor and be actively involved in State Building Code revisions for the purpose of improving customer service.**
- C. Catawba County will provide continuing educational opportunities for its Building Services staff and contractors.**
- D. Plan Review will be offered at either office.**
- E. A minimum of five sets of plans will be required for plan review; one set for each Building Services Office; one set each for the Fire Marshal, Environmental Health; and one set to be returned marked to the owner or their representative. NOTE: Municipalities may require more sets for additional, non-building services review. (Contractor's approved set must be made available to Building Services Official at all times.)**
- F. Building Plan reviews will be reviewed thoroughly to minimize field changes; Plan Review staff will take the time initially to avoid problems in the field.**
- G. When the State adopted Building Codes are unclear and/or subject to interpretation, unless overruled by the North Carolina Department of Insurance, or the health, safety, and welfare of the public is at risk, a Registered North Carolina Architect or Engineer's opinion and interpretation of the applicable code will be accepted.**
- H. County will offer Local Option Plan Review**

- a. Catawba County plans to apply for Local Option Plan Review approval through the State Department of Insurance for consideration at its September, 2003, meeting.
- b. Local Option Plan Review will be achieved, as quickly as possible, allowing the Division to review more types of plans and also enabling the Division to offer the Pilot Rehabilitation Code.

I. County will offer Pilot Rehabilitation Code

- a. Catawba County plans to apply for Pilot Rehabilitation Code approval through the State Department of Insurance for consideration at its December 2003, meeting.
- b. Upon approval, and as soon as feasible, citizens will be given the option between the North Carolina Building Code and the Pilot Rehabilitation Code when renovating existing buildings.

J. County will offer Express Plan Review (EPR)

- a. Beginning January 1st, 2004, the Building Services Division will begin offering EPR, by appointment only, on Wednesdays within the unincorporated areas of the County and the incorporated areas where municipalities are willing to commit the necessary staff (Zoning, Fire, etc.) to assist in performing the service.
- b. Specific details and requirements for employing EPR will be available to the public by December 1st, 2003.
- c. Higher fees will be charged for EPR to cover the cost of assembling and dedicating staff.
- d. In the future, other days and times may be added as demand for EPR requires.

4.) Customers will receive courteous service.

Outcomes

- A. Building Services Division personnel will provide professional and courteous service. The County will conduct customer service surveys semi-annually to evaluate the program and obtain feedback.**
- B. Building Services Division personnel will successfully participate in eight hours of training in customer service-related issues such as communication, skill building and tact, diffusion of adversarial situations and problem resolution.**
- C. 98% of Customer complaints regarding service will be resolved within 24 hours.**
- G. Building Service staff will be accessible by phone from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday, with the exception of lunch.**
- H. Following plan review, property Owners/Developers and Design Professionals will receive feedback by phone, e-mail or fax.**
- I. To maintaining accuracy of the County's GIS System, Building Services Officials will continue to use GPS units to locate all new buildings during construction.**

BUILDING SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 1.) A Building Services Advisory Committee will be convened quarterly to promote sound building inspection services, which encourages safe building construction, regional economic growth, and a healthy real estate industry through meaningful input into**

the County's building inspection and administrative processes. It will also serve as a forum to educate the building community at large.

2.) The Building Services Advisory Committee will include representation from local government and trade associations.

3.) Members may include: Chief Building Services Official, Assistant Chief, Director of Utilities and Engineering, Director of Planning, Plan Review Supervisor, Environmental Health Supervisor, Fire Marshal, representative(s) from each Municipality, the Executive Officer of the Home Builders Association of Hickory and Catawba Valley, Design Professional (N.C. Registered Architect or Engineer), Developer, Realtor, Banker, General/Building Contractor, Electrical Contractor, Plumbing Contractor, Mechanical Contractor, Fire Alarm Contractor, Sprinkler Contractor, Building Supply Merchant, County Commissioner, and Member(s) at large (citizen).