

January 2015

ZONING INSPECTION PROGRAM RE-IMPLEMENTED

The Zoning Inspection Program first began in 2006 and was a great asset to the department and to Building Inspection customers. However, the funding for this program was lost in 2009 due to budget cuts during the 2009 economic downturn.

Now that the economy is recovering, the Program is back and going strong!

Four Zoning Inspectors were hired in September with

four more coming on board in May, making the team complete with 8 inspectors. Each group participated in two weeks of intense training in the Development Code before reporting to their district office assignments.

The program is designed so that an inspector with specialized training in



Left to right: Roderick Palmer, Alphie Guillory, Michael Herron, Michael Casmer, Ana Ipina, Greg Franklin, Jewel Pointer, Kendall Wilson

the Dallas Development Code (zoning ordinance) will inspect construction for compliance with zoning regulations. This also allows the building inspector, who previously performed zoning inspections along with building code inspections, to concentrate fully on enforcement

of the Dallas Building Code.

This results in a more comprehensive and consistent interpretation of the zoning regulations,

which inevitably benefits the contractor and homeowner. "The zoning codes can sometimes be complicated and having experts out there to help you is a big plus, saving you time and heartburn," says Jewel Pointer, Zoning Inspector for the Southwest District Office.

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The Team is also responsible for responding to citizen inquiries related to possible zoning violations at permitted construction sites in their neighborhood and throughout the city. Ana Ipina, Southeast District Office Zoning Inspector says, "I feel that the service we provide is a balance between respecting the concerns of the citizens and fulfilling the needs of the contractors, making the city of Dallas a better place."

The Zoning Inspection Program is a direct result of Building Inspection's commitment of quality service to contractors and the community.

MESSAGE FROM THE BUILDING OFFICIAL



I've never been one to make new year's resolutions but I do like to take time at the beginning of each year to reflect on the accomplishments of the old year

and refocus my efforts for the upcoming year.

As I look back at 2014, I'm pleased with the partnership we have enjoyed with the construction community and the feedback you have given us on how we

do business. Some have provided ideas for improvements that we have now implemented, such as the issuance of a Certificate of Completion that is issued upon final building inspection for a shell building or single family dwellings.

New and updated technology is in the works for 2015 which will result in easier access to records, a more convenient check in process through the use of kiosks, options for submitting plans electronically and an updated website.

I'm looking forward to another produc-

tive year working with you to make Dallas a safe and sustainable city both now and in the future.

I wish you, your families and your businesses a safe, prosperous and happy 2015!

Larry

PLUMBING INSPECTORS EARN MED GAS ENDORSEMENTS

For the first time, in February 2012, State legislature allowed inspectors to hold endorsements on their inspector's licenses, including Med Gas. Previously, endorsements could only be obtained on plumbing licenses. After a lengthy process, Texas Board of Plumbing Examiners set forth the rules for these new endorsements and Dallas plumbing inspectors began to prepare.

To receive the Med Gas Endorsement,



Standing L to R: Richard Denham (Asst. Chief), Dianne Villarreal (Chief), Terry Johnson, Mary Conger, Shar Blatnick. Seated L to R: Jeff Chapman, Richard Conger, Jim Shelton, Jr., Daniel Castillo

an inspector is required to complete the 24 hour Medical Gas and Vacuum System Training Course and pass the State exam—not a easy feat.

Dallas can now boast that 12 of our 15 plumbing inspectors hold the Med Gas Endorsement on their Plumbing Inspector's License. Some inspectors who already held a Master's Plumbing License elected to take the endorsement further by taking and passing the Master's Med Gas Endorsement exam, which required brazing of two 1-1/2" copper fittings.



L to R: Oscar Smith, Bruce Atchison, Crit Fowler, Jim O'Neill (District Manager), Keith Mueller

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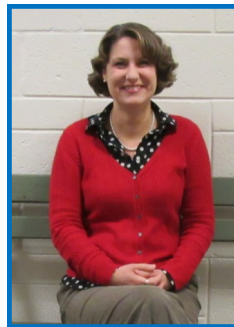


L to R: David Berry, Bob Hopper, James Shelton, Sr., Alfred Echols

BUILDING INSPECTION HIRES CHIEF PLANNER

Megan Wimer was hired in December as Building Inspection's only Chief Planner. After graduating from the University of Arkansas, Megan started her planning career as a consultant in Orlando, Florida, with a primary

focus on comprehensive planning and due diligence and property evaluation. She has been with the City of Dallas for seven years. Prior to coming to Building Inspection, she was a Senior Planner in the Current Planning



Megan Wimer

Division. As Chief Planner, she supervises the zoning team, provides technical advice on zoning and land use matters, and makes interpretations of the Dallas Development Code. The Chief Planner position provides

additional representation of the Building Official and helps ensure that permits are issued in a timely manner and compliance with the Dallas Development Code, which benefits the Department and our customers.

DALLAS RECEIVES AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP



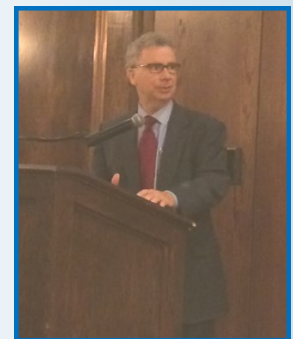
Zaida Basora and Larry Holmes

The City of Dallas received the Sustainable Leadership Award for our Green Building Code implementation from CoreNET Global. Building Official Larry Holmes and Public Works Assistant Director (Former Building Official) Zaida Basora travelled to the annual Awards and Recognition event in Washington D.C. to receive the award in October.

CITY MANAGER SPEAKS TO HOME BUILDERS

On November 6, 2014, City Manager A.C. Gonzalez was the keynote speaker at a monthly luncheon of the Dallas Home Builders Association.

Mr. Gonzalez spoke highly of the job Building Inspection is doing and gave a favorable overview of Dallas' economic outlook.



A.C. Gonzalez

CHIEF'S CORNER

WHEN DOES A SPACE REQUIRE AN EMERGENCY ESCAPE OPENING?

By Chief Building Inspector David Session

The determination of whether a space is treated as a sleeping room is important for obvious safety reasons. An overnight fire may leave an occupant with no choice but to attempt an escape directly to the exterior. In this case, the use of a room labeled or marketed as a bedroom without an emergency escape feature can literally be a matter of life or death. The word "bedroom" as used throughout is synonymous with the word "sleeping room."

The International Residential Code requires an emergency escape opening in three instances: 1) in a bedroom; 2) in a habitable attic, and 3) in a basement. We will look at each of these in turn.

Bedroom. What makes a space a bedroom? First, a bedroom has to meet certain minimum requirements for a

habitable room. In addition, the room is either designated a bedroom or designed as a bedroom.

Let's begin with the phrase, "habitable space." This phrase is used by the Code to describe a room or space that has as its requirement a specified amount of natural or mechanical light and ventilation sources. These spaces, by definition, are rooms for living, sleeping, eating, and cooking and have special area requirements, as well as dimensional, ceiling height, and heating requirements. Rooms that do not meet these requirements are not considered habitable and may not be considered as prospective bedrooms – unless modified.

Assuming that the space meets all the previous requirements, the second criteria is literally the room designation. Is it labeled as a bedroom? If so, it is treated as a bedroom. Or, if not designated a bedroom, "Does the room have a closable door and a built-in closet?" If it does, it is treated as a bedroom.

Habitable Attic. Compare the bedroom list of items with the habitable attic. An

attic has fewer criteria to meet before crossing the "habitable" threshold which requires an emergency escape opening. It has area and height requirements as does the bedroom. But, beyond these two criteria, the space must only occur between the uppermost floor level and the roof above and also meet the minimum live load requirements. If the attic is accessed directly from

and at the same floor level of the story from Heated Square Footage area, the most stringent provisions apply.

Basement. Finally, a basement requires an emergency escape opening unless it is limited to less than 200 square feet and dedicated to housing mechanical equipment.

A space is either part of a story, the attic, or a basement. If there are questions, consult with your plans examiner. Each case is considered individually. A finished area does not imply that the space conforms to any requirements for light and ventilation. On the other hand, an unfinished area does not mean that a space does not qualify as a habitable area.

The final determination on number of bedrooms may be verified by the prospective homeowner and/or realtor by viewing a copy of the approved permit application or the issued permit.

"...An overnight fire may leave an occupant with no choice but to attempt an escape directly to the exterior."

DID YOU KNOW...

- ◆ You can provide feedback on Building Inspection services by going to the [Building Home Page](#) and clicking on "How are we doing?"
- ◆ You can access previous editions of this newsletter by clicking on "Industry Newsletter" located on the left side of the [BI Home Page](#).
- ◆ Long-time BI employee Birdie Spencer is retiring at the end of this month.

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BUILDING INSPECTION NEWS

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