THIRD PARTY INSPECTION
GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES
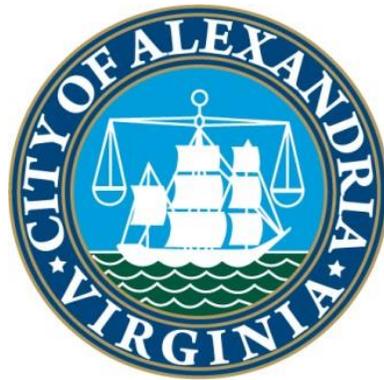
Effective December 1, 2017

BASED ON THE VIRGINIA UNIFORM STATEWIDE BUILDING CODE

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I.   Purpose

There are many reasons why a property owner may have a reasonable need for inspections to be conducted outside the normal operating procedures of the Department of Code Administration ("Department"). This policy is intended to provide clarity on the requirements for **prior approval** of third party inspections as permitted by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC).

Third Party Inspections (TPI) are permitted under the VUSBC, **with the approval** of the Director of Code Administration or his/her designee. Unlike Special Inspections, which are mandated by the Virginia Construction Code for critical structures, TPIs are intended to supplement inspections as required by the VUSBC, typically performed by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). It is important to note that the VUSBC allows for third party inspector utilization however, the AHJ must establish a policy detailing when they can be used, the procedures for their use, qualifications of the inspectors and the procedures for inspection documentation reporting. Although the VUSBC establishes the criteria for the application and approval of inspection agencies, VUSBC language provides additional guidance, and forms the basis of the Department's policy.

This TPI policy will attempt to clarify the following:

1. When Third-Party Inspections can be utilized
2. The qualifications to become an approved Third-Party Inspector
3. The submittal processes
4. The insurance and licensing requirements
5. The ongoing training and educational requirements
6. Inspection reporting procedures
7. The Quality Assurance Program

Per the VUSBC
"113.7.1 Third-party inspectors. Each building official charged with the enforcement of the USBC shall have a written policy establishing the minimum acceptable qualifications for third-party inspectors. The policy shall include the format and time frame required for submission of reports, any prequalification or preapproval requirements before conducting a third-party inspection and any other requirements and procedures established by the building official."

II.   Basis for Third Party Inspections

Large Scale Development:

In this model, third party inspections are intended to replace normally requested inspections conducted by Code Administration. When approved by the Department due to their large scale, the demands of these projects could place excessive workloads on daily inspection services provided by the Department and in turn cause delays to construction project and other customers. The requirements and the specific process related to when and how third-party inspections may be utilized on such projects shall be specified in an agreement **provided in a Letter of Request** by the building owner that must be approved before the project begins.

Projects that may utilize this option include:

- Mixed use or large development projects such as mid-rise buildings
- Large geotechnical projects requiring extensive ground work preparation
- High rise development projects

Augmentation to the Department of Code Administration's Services:

This shall include any scenario where the normal inspection process cannot provide service within two working days of the request or special circumstances that may include the need for services outside of normal working hours (which may include periods of inspector training and holidays). In these situations, no third-party inspections are to be performed until pre-approval is obtained. The request to perform a third-party inspection must be approved at least one working day (two days preceding a holiday) in advance of the need. A minimum of two working days (three preceding a holiday) are required to evaluate a request when the provider has not been previously approved by the Department.

Note:
- These approvals are only for specific projects and inspectors, identified and approved to conduct third party inspections and are on a case by case review
- Elevator Inspections are not covered under this program

Per the USBC

113.7 Approved inspection agencies. The building official may accept reports of inspections and tests from individuals or inspection agencies approved in accordance with the building official's written policy required by Section 113.

Limitations:

Third Party Inspections are not intended to replace city inspections conducted during the normal course of a business day. They may be utilized only for special circumstances as noted above or as agreed to for Large Scale Development/Special projects. Unless the service is provided as part of a Large-Scale Development/Special Projects or an on-going project, previously approved, each project shall be approved in advance.

TPI inspections conducted after the failure of the City of Alexandria to provide services within two working days of "request" as specified under the VUSBC shall require pre-approval of the TPI and his/her field inspector performing the inspection.

Note: Due to the many specific requirements found in various City of Alexandria ordinances/procedures and as a final measure of quality assurance, Third Party Inspectors will not be permitted to conduct inspections for Life Safety (Sprinkler and Fire Alarm), Building Inspections (including concealments and finals) or Certificate of Occupancy inspections (Special permission required by the Director of Code Administration or his/her designee).

III.   Qualifications

Qualifications:

The Third-Party Inspectors shall demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform inspections in their area of expertise. Not only must they demonstrate a technical knowledge of the code and trade they inspect, they must also demonstrate that they have applicable knowledge of the USBC, the Department policy and other applicable City regulations and procedures. Third Party Inspectors must provide the following for evaluation and pre-qualification purposes to the Special Projects Manager, responsible for the project:

- Written identification of the specific trade to be inspected (Mechanical, Electrical or Plumbing)
- Resumes and copies of applicable certifications for individual that may be performing inspections will be reviewed and approved through the ratification process
  Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) certification(s) as an inspector in the specific area of inspections performed; or

- International Code Council certification(s) as an inspector in the specific area(s) of inspections performed (and documented attendance at the Virginia Building Code Academy CORE module within six months) and related DHCD Training; or
- A registered design professional practicing within their area of competency as related to the area of inspection

Experience:

The Third-Party Inspector must demonstrate knowledge of the applicable technical provisions, the USBC and related Department policies including applicable City of Alexandria regulations. The Third-Party Inspector will also be able to demonstrate the following minimum experience:

- A minimum of five years of experience conducting inspections within the specific area of expertise as regulated by the VUSBC and the Virginia Certification Standards. Applicants may also submit for consideration additional qualifications to substantiate equivalent experience
- Applicants may substitute two years of field construction supervision experience (with Virginia Master Tradesman card where applicable) for each one year of field inspection experience if it is relevant to the area of inspections being sought for approval.
- Documented approval by another Virginia locality when the locality's program has been deemed to be equivalent to this policy

Exception: Registered Design Professionals or Professional Engineers with Virginia credentials clearly practicing in their area of qualification and experience are not required to seek pre-approval of their inspection qualifications. This exception does not extend to employees of the RDP or P.E. The written request to perform the inspection shall contain the RDP or P.E. seal so that their professional registration can be verified. Except for Large Scale Development/Special Projects, Registered Design Professionals and Professional Engineers will be required to seek pre-approval for specific inspections.

The Director of Code Administration or his/her designee, reserves the right to require more than the above minimum requirements in specific situations.

Independence:
Third Party Inspectors shall maintain independence from any person or firm responsible for construction of work they will inspect. The Third-Party Inspector will remain independent from the property owner(s), designers, permit holders, contractors or sub-contractors whose work is being inspected. The Third-Party Inspector shall maintain a high degree of professionalism, neutrality and autonomy necessary to secure the health, safety and welfare provisions of the VUSBC. Although compensated for service by the building owner/developer, the Third-Party Inspector is ultimately responsible to the Director of Code Administration. If the Third-Party Inspector discovers any attempts by the responsible party to cover or conceal discrepancies or rejected work, the Inspector shall immediately contact the City's Special Projects Manager, responsible for the TPI Program.

Staffing:
Only those persons, whose resumes have been approved by the Director of Code Administration or his/her designee, may perform inspections under the approved Third-Party Inspector. Inspectors that have not received prior approval shall not conduct work associated with any inspection(s) on an approved site. Actions of this type are not permitted and shall be grounds for revocation of agency approval. An approved agency wishing to bring on additional field inspectors shall present the Director of Code Administration with a resume to be reviewed for approval. Once the proposed inspector's resume has been ratified, Director, or his/her designee will contact the Third-Party Inspector with results.

IV.   Submittal Package Contents

Application submission required to include:
- Letter from owner/developer requesting said Third Party Inspector
- Proposed TPI principal's resume including Commonwealth of Virginia RDP or PE credentials including DPOR license number
- Proposed field inspectors resume(s) including training and applicable certifications
- Related job experiences (in detail)
- Designation of independence from owner or contractor
- Insurance requirements
- Copy of Business License (jurisdiction where business based)
- Copy of Contractors License (Virginia State License, DPOR)

It is the intent of the Department of Code Administration that this policy will help to guide and direct the Third-Party Inspection approval and implementation process. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please forward those to the Special Projects Manager @ 703.746.4210.

V.   Insurance Requirements

Insurance Requirement:
The applicant must submit proof of General Liability Insurance and/or Professional Errors and Omissions Insurance with a minimum dollar value of the permit or $1,000,000 for each occurrence.

VI.   License Requirements

Business License:
The person or agency performing third party inspections shall provide documentation of appropriate business license from the jurisdiction where the business is based, within submittal.

Contractor License: The person or agency performing third party inspections shall provide documentation of their respective license as required per the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulations, within submittal.

VII.   Training and Educational Requirements

Training and Continuing Education:
All qualified TPI's and their agents shall attend the following training required for approval:
- Any Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development code update or mandated training
- Any required training to maintain a professional license or certification.

VIII.   Conducting Inspections

Scheduling:

For Large Scale Development Projects, Third Party Inspections shall be scheduled by the established procedures below:

- Inspection requests for Large Scale Development shall be scheduled by the general contractor to the Third-Party Inspector
- The Third-Party Inspector will conduct the inspection and within 24 hours of inspection, forward all reports of Pass/Fail status (with violation articles cites) to the designated FTP site for automated data introduction into the City of Alexandria's permit system

Inspection Reports:

When associated with a Large Project Development, the inspection report must be received by the Department of Code Administration within 24 hours of inspection, utilizing the Permit Center Portal (see: APPENDIX A) reporting procedures. This inspection record shall contain any deficiencies which shall be identified with sufficient detail and applicable code sections. The Special Projects Manager will review inspection reports to assure that the construction inspected is in compliance with the USBC. The inspection report shall include:

- The Third-Party Inspector's Initials
- The name of the pre-qualified agent
- The applicable trade permit number
- Street address
- Inspection type
- Date and time of the inspection
- Inspection results with deficiencies properly identified stating code article(s)

Note: Photographs, videotapes or other sources of pertinent data or information may be considered as substantiating evidence of reports and tests. *FTP connection with City ITS required.

IX.   Quality Assurance Program

Purpose:

The purpose of a Quality Assurance Program is ensuring that the approved TPI and/or his/her field inspector is conducting thorough inspections per the USBC and that those inspections being conducted are contiguous, or in harmony, with the AHJ.

There are two general programs that will ensure TPI's accuracy and completeness. The TPI's own Internal Quality Assurance Program, and the Department of Code Administration's Quality Assurance Program:

Third Party Inspector, Internal Quality Assurance Program:
The approved Third-Party Inspector shall have an internal policy of ensuring Quality Control of inspections conducted under the TPI principal's signature. This policy shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of Code Administration or his/her designee.

Department of Code Administration, Quality Assurance Program:
The Department of Code Administration reserves the right to perform quality assurance inspections without prior notice to evaluate the performance of the Third-Party Inspector. The interval shall be determined by the Director of Code Administration or his/her designee.

Results from QA Inspections:
Results from Quality Assurance Inspections shall be recorded in the City's permit data base. If a re-inspection is required, documentation will be forwarded to the respective Third-Party Inspector for re-inspection.

Revocation of Approval:
The Director of Code Administration or his/her designee may suspend or revoke the inspection privileges of a pre-approved Third-Party Inspector if any of the following are found to be true;

1. Failure to maintain required certifications or licenses
2. Failure to maintain the minimum required insurance
3. Failure to adhere to the requirements for inspection scheduling or reporting
4. Failure to perform proper inspections in accordance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
5. Failure to ensure compliance with the approved drawings, Department of Code Administration's written policy, or other City of Alexandria department policies
6. Failure to attend required training or meetings that are required by this program
7. Failure to maintain independence from the individuals or firms responsible the construction being inspected
8. Failure to have pre-approved, third party personnel, performing inspections
9. Falsification of reports

Note: Any decision rendered by the Department of Code Administration may be appealed to the Local Building Code Appeals Board following the appeals provisions established in the USBC.

X.   Approval Duration

There is no annual TPI approval authorization. Approval of the TPI is site specific, and will only remain in effect for the duration of the project.

Failure to comply with the terms of the above-policy may result in inspection approvals being rescinded and dis-approval of Third Party Inspector status.

XI.   Additional Information

For more information, contact us at:

City of Alexandria
Department of Code Administration
Special Projects Manager
301 King Street, suite 4200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
703.746.4200 Main Office
703.746.4210 Special Projects Desk

Or visit us on the web at: alexandriava.gov/code

APPENDIX A

REPORTING PROCEDURES TO THE BUILDING OFFICIAL

The following is the required process of submitting documents ensuring timely, accurate and complete submission of inspection reports to the Department of Code Administration. Please refer to the instructions below for instructions on how to set up a user account with the City of Alexandria's Permit Center Portal:

1. Go to https://www.alexandriava.gov
2. Click on "I want to…" in the top right corner:
3. Select Building & Construction Permits from the menu –
4. Halfway down the page, Click on the link for Alexandria Online Permit Center
5. If you're a first-time user, click Register to use the Online Permit Center
6. This will take you to the My Alex Web Login page where you can:
7. Log in OR at the bottom, "Click" on the Need a new login account link to create an account, which   will take you to the Register for a Login Account page. You will see the same title across the top of the page. Enter details and create an account
8. After successfully logging in, click on the Permit Information & Payments link:
9. Here you can search for a case or Type in a Case (Permit) Number
10. Click on the Upload Files tab:
11. Click on Browse to select the file to upload:
12. Once selected, click the Upload button. You will see the words, "FILE UPLOADED**"**

NOTE: File is limited to 200 MB per file. Please break submissions down to 200 MB. This procedure will ensure that you have completed the steps necessary to begin uploading Third-Party Inspection Reports directly into our data base. If you are an approved Third-Party Inspector, this is the required process used for submitting inspection reports.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding this information, please contact:

Special Projects Manager 703.746.4210

Department of Code Administration 703.746.4200