

Construction Industry Communication #31

From: Amit Ghosh, Chief Building Official
Re: Emergency Work/Permitting
Date: November 25, 2009

Background: The Building and Zoning Services (BZS) recognizes that certain emergency conditions may require immediate work be performed in order to help ensure the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Columbus. An emergency includes, but is not limited to, structural, mechanical, plumbing and/or electrical system failures.

Emergency-related work may commence prior to obtaining a building permit, however, application for proper permits shall be made as soon as possible on the same day the work has been performed or as soon as the BZS office is open for business.

Memorandum: When an emergency condition exists, the following procedures shall be adhered to in order to avoid a determination that work is being performed without a permit:

1. A dated e-mail, fax or hand-delivered written request shall be provided to the trade inspection supervisor identifying the scope of work and the location of the project prior to commencement of the work (when applicable) -- the inspection supervisor will evaluate the need for the emergency work condition and approve/disapprove this request.
2. A copy of said approved request is to be immediately provided to the Chief Building Official (CBO) and the Building Compliance Section (BCS) Manager for informational purposes.
3. An "APO Condition" shall be placed in BZS's permitting database system (Accela) on the day of the request by the appropriate inspection supervisor or their designee that emergency work is being performed. A detailed description of the work shall be entered into Accela and BZS's information database (shared drive) for follow up by the Building Compliance Section (BCS).
4. The contractor or owner performing the work must apply for all necessary permits within the next business day of the emergency request and provide all required information, make full payment and obtain the permit. Failure to obtain the permit in the timeframe required may result in a determination of "Working without a Permit" and the customer may be assessed the appropriate fee as indicated in the current Fee Schedule.

5. The BCS Manager or designee shall verify that all approved emergency work requests have obtained the required permits. Building orders may be written on any outstanding emergency work requests for which a permit has not been obtained.
6. Upon completion of all permitted emergency-related work, the appropriate inspections and approvals shall be obtained.

Revised 4/3/2026