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MEMO

TO: All Building Officials in Miami-Dade County

FROM:  Secretary of the Board
Board of Rules and Appeals (BORA)

DATE: September 25th, 2020

SUBJECT: BORA Proposed Guidelines for Emergency Response

At their meeting of September 24th, 2020, the Board of Rules and Appeals considered a report of the recommendations from the September 16th BORA Building Subcommittee regarding guidelines for emergency response measures taken by Building Departments in Miami Dade County. The proposed guidelines were intended to assist Building Officials by providing best practice procedures on inspection and plans examination that could be implemented following an emergency. Fundamentally, the guidance to Building Departments would focus on *allowable alternate inspections, electronic plan review, virtual inspections, and remote work capability*. By identifying a set of emergency best practice guidelines, building departments can better prepare to continue providing services and enhance their operation's resiliency.

The Board of Rules and Appeals was presented the Building Subcommittee's recommendations and, after deliberation, adopted the following BORA Proposed Guidelines for Emergency Response:

BORA Proposed Guidelines for Emergency Response

General Recommendation

All Building Departments in Miami-Dade County are recommended to develop and have the capacity for an emergency plan of action that can be implemented when services at the principle place of business are not accessible or available.

Specific Guideline Areas

Allowable Alternate Inspections

In emergency conditions, Building Department may accept inspections conducted by the non-permit holder **design professional** (Architect or Engineer) with no financial interest in the project. *This should be considered particularly when Building Departments are unable to provide full range of services in this area.*



Electronic Plan Review

Each Building Departments must develop an emergency **electronic plan review process** that abides by all conditions under the emergency and any/all submissions must conform to applicable requirements of the governing body at the State level.

Virtual Inspections

The implementation of virtual inspections are recommended and the use of the **Virtual Inspections Guidelines** established in the Mayor's Amendment No. 1 to Miami-Dade County Emergency Order 14-20 dated April 9, 2020 - Exhibit 1: *Modified Procedures for Building Code Inspections During COVID-19 Emergency Period* contained in section 2(b) are recommended as framework with reference to Building Departments in general, with no endorsement of specific technology platforms.

Virtual Inspections Guidelines

1. Applicability

The following guidelines for virtual inspections can be used when a physical inspection by the code official is not possible due to a declared emergency. The process of virtual inspections is not intended to address or cover all types of inspections. These guidelines do not prohibit building departments from conducting inspections in person.

2. Procedures for Virtual Inspection

Virtual Inspections are conducted by using a video call on a smart phone or tablet to interact with the building department's inspector. The process for Remote Virtual Inspection is as follows:

- The building department must select a video communication platform or interface to communicate with the permit holder in a virtual meeting.
- The permit holder will schedule the inspections to an online portal or by contacting the building department
- When scheduling the inspection, the permit holder must provide a contact name, contact number, and contact email address so that the inspector can schedule a remote virtual meeting invite on the selected platform.
- On the day of the scheduled inspection, the inspector will contact the permit holder and schedule the remote virtual inspection for a specific inspection time.
- The meeting invite will contain instructions on requirements and documents that need to be submitted to the inspector prior to the remote virtual inspection.
- At the scheduled time, the contractor will need to join the virtual meeting.
- Ensure the person walking the site has the necessary tools (based on the inspection type) readily available. For example, a tape measure level, GFCI tester, ladder, flashlight, etc.

3. Permit Holder Responsibilities

- Ensure your inspection location has 4G connectivity and your smart phone or tablet has 4G connectivity. You must have the corresponding App for the Remote Virtual Inspection.
- Make sure the smart phone or tablet is fully charged.
- Be ready to accept a video call at the scheduled time and respond to requests from the inspector.



- Make sure the auto rotate feature on your phone is turned on.
- Make sure to move slowly so the inspector can see the image clearly.
- Allow camera a moment to focus when showing specific items.
- Make sure any testing equipment, manometer, pressure valves, etc. are already set up.
- Have the required tools (tape measure, level, GFCI tester, step ladder, etc.)
- Turn off phone or tablet notifications during the video call. Notifications can freeze the video call and will cause delays to the inspection or could require the inspection to be rescheduled.

4. How to Perform the Actual Virtual Inspection

- Begin inspection at street view looking at structure, exterior of property and close in on house or unit number. The contractor will show the inspector the following documents at the start of the inspection. If these documents are not available, the inspection will not be conducted and “*Not Ready for Inspection*” will result.
 - (i) Notice of Commencement (for new inspections)
 - (ii) Permit card
 - (iii) Approved Permit job-copy plans
 - (iv) Depending on the inspection type, any reports or special inspector letters necessary to enable inspection to be conducted.
- Follow the directions of the inspector. The inspection will be conducted by following the standard operating procedures outlined in the department’s inspection checklists, as applicable.
- Make note of any items that require correction.
- When an inspection is performed through the virtual inspection process, the inspector reserves the right to perform an on-site inspection. This may be due to a connection issue or the complexity of the inspection.
- The inspector will tell you in the video call if the inspection has passed or failed and instruct you where to find the documented results of the inspection.

Remote Work Capability

All Building Departments in Miami-Dade County should develop the capability to **perform work remotely** during an emergency. Specifically, Building Officials and code certified personal should be adequately equipped to be able to continue to perform inspections and plans review functions during such periods.

As directed by the Board, the above procedures are intended to be advisory in nature and the use of the guidelines by Building Departments, Building Officials and code certified personnel would be discretionary. Should you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact Jaime Gascon, Director, Board and Code Administration Division at (786) 315-2508.