



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BUILDING SERVICES DIVISION

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“Certificates of Occupancy”

“No building or structure shall be used or occupied, and no change in the existing occupancy classification of a building or structure or portion thereof shall be made until the building official has issued a certificate of occupancy therefore....” (IBC/IRC § 110.1)

This form is developed to assist the reader in answering some common questions regarding Certificates of Occupancy, code requirements, and City process and policies regarding the issuance of Certificates of Occupancy.

➤ **What is a Certificate of Occupancy?**

A “Certificate of Occupancy” (“CO”) is a document separate and independent from a building permit. As cited above, the Building Codes (which are adopted by the State) require that a CO be issued for all buildings, structures, or portions thereof *prior to* any authorization for use or occupancy of the premises. The CO is issued to the owner and provides indication that the structure or space has been inspected for general code compliance, that no violations have been found, and that the building or structure meets the basic life-safety provisions of the Codes. A CO must be in place prior to occupancy.

How does it work? Following the completion of a building construction project, and approval of final inspections by the Building Services Division, and after verification with other City departments that the project has been inspected for code compliance, the Building Official is authorized to issue a CO. Projects are reviewed, inspected, and approved pursuant to the regulatory codes and standards (in effect at the time of permitting) associated with the use and occupancy classifications for which the building, structure, or portion(s) thereof were designed and intended. The issuance of a CO is not to be construed as an approval of any code violations unknown at the time of issuance, nor does it provide a guarantee or warranty toward the quality of construction.

➤ **What types of projects require a CO?**

The following projects will generally require the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy:

- All new commercial and multi-family buildings and their accessory buildings
- All new single-family buildings*, and most accessory buildings*
- Substantial alterations and additions to commercial and multi-family buildings
- Commercial tenant improvements where the work involves:
 - A **change in use** of the space under consideration
 - Build-out/completion of previously unimproved space (e.g. shell buildings)

* Applies to one and two-family dwellings constructed pursuant to 2003 International Residential Code (i.e., one & two-family buildings constructed after July 1, 2004 – when the code became effective in WA).

➤ **What is the process to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy?**

Generally, the Building Services Division will automatically process and issue a CO for a newly constructed one or two-family dwellings following approval of final inspection(s). These types of projects have typically received their project approvals from other City departments during the permitting process, or during the construction process. For new commercial and multi-family projects, the approval process becomes somewhat more involved, as each project will have unique construction and infrastructure for its site and may additionally have specific conditions of approval. At the time of permitting for these types of projects, the Building Services Division will provide the owner (or authorized project representative) with a copy of the City's "[Project Close-out Requirements](#)" checklist and other information to assist the developer and owner with preparing for the final approvals that are required to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy at the close of construction. To assist with the CO approval process, the following steps are required for new commercial and multi-family projects:

1. Early in the construction process, the owner (or authorized project representative) notifies City staff of the target date(s) for occupancy.
2. 60-90 days before the occupancy target date, the owner must contact the Building Services Division to set up a preoccupancy meeting. This meeting will provide a discussion and review of the project closeout items required for the project and the approvals required for issuing a CO.
3. 30 days before the occupancy target date, the owner calls the Building Services Division to start the internal CO paperwork and processing.
4. The owner is then responsible for ensuring that the project work is complete and that all required inspections are scheduled with each of the appropriate departments and agencies involved in approval of the project work. (*Delays in approval for occupancy are typically related directly to incomplete/substandard work, or failure to obtain required approvals.*)
5. City departments involved with the project must approve the work and provide sign-off before the CO (or "TCO" – see below) can be issued. Approvals generally relate to completion of site work such as landscaping, utility infrastructure requirements, as-built drawings (including GIS), etc.
6. After confirming required sign-offs are complete, the Building Services Division will prepare the CO document. Staff will contact the appropriate project representative when the CO is ready for pickup at City Hall.

➤ **Does the City of DuPont issue "Temporary" Certificates of Occupancy?**

At the discretion of the Building Official, a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy ("TCO") may be issued for a project (or portion thereof), authorizing its use or occupancy prior to issuing a final Certificate of Occupancy. Issuance of a TCO will be considered *only* where (1) all life-safety requirements for the space under consideration have been met; (2) only incidental construction work remains on the project; (3) the owner agrees to meet all conditions of approval and complete all remaining work prior to the City issuing the final CO. Where authorized, a TCO is typically issued valid for up to 90 days. A request for TCO must be made in writing. The fee is \$200.

(Questions? Contact the Building Services Division for additional information.)