

## **CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY PROCEDURES FOR THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**

The Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is the final construction document issued by the Building Official to authorize occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building issues. Section 116.1 of the 2003 Virginia Uniform Building Code (USBC) states that:

**"A certificate of occupancy, indicating completion of the work for which a permit was issued shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of a structure, except as provided for in this section generally and as specifically provided for in Section 113.8 for additions and alterations."**

The Certificate of Occupancy follows the final approval of all issued trade and building permits, the completion of required site plan items and/or permit or BAR conditions, and the completion of the special use permit (SUP or DSUP) requirements agreed to at the beginning of the construction process. The purpose of this handout is to explain the CO process for the City of Alexandria, the responsibility of the customer, and the responsibility of each City agency in recommending approval of the CO to the Building Official.

In Alexandria, the CO process begins and ends with the Code Enforcement Bureau. It is recommended that the CO be applied for at the same time that the initial construction permits and plans are submitted for review. This usually speeds up the CO process as the project nears completion and settlement or move-in dates are being decided.

While the Code Enforcement Bureau administers the CO process, inspections must be coordinated with, and approvals obtained from, the following agencies:

1. Planning and Zoning and, when applicable, the Board of Architectural Review (BAR);
2. Transportation and Environmental Services;
3. Health Department (when applicable); and
4. Code Enforcement Bureau.

Separate inspections are conducted by each agency to ensure that the items under their jurisdiction have been completed by the customer. For projects obligated to pay into the Housing Trust Fund, the approval of Housing is also needed before a CO is issued. For projects that involve food (restaurants, hotel or school kitchens, quick marts, stores, etc.); child or adult care (day care centers, retirement homes, schools, etc.); doctor or dental offices; public or private swimming pools- health or massage therapy establishments; nail and hair salons; and other types of business' that involve food or health related matters, approval by the Health Department is also required before a CO may be issued.

It is recommended that a two week "cushion" be allowed between the completion of construction and the intended settlement date, "move-in" date, or grand opening event requiring an issued CO. This two-week period will allow for any noted deficiencies to be corrected in time for the scheduled settlement/opening without delaying the CO. While the Code Enforcement Bureau usually conducts CO inspections on the date requested, Transportation & Environmental Services, Planning & Zoning, BAR, and the Health Department require three to five days for their inspections. It is important to have one site person designated to coordinate the inspection process, communicate with the inspection agencies to resolve any inspection disapprovals, and

then follow up with the Code Enforcement Bureau to obtain the issued CO. For disapproved inspections, the specific inspection agency should be contacted to reschedule the inspection once the issue is resolved.

- Planning and Zoning \ BAR 703 838-4666
- Transportation & Environmental Services 703 838-4324
- Health Department 703 838-4400
- Code Enforcement 703 838-4360

Planning and coordination by site personnel is essential as it is usually not possible to obtain the CO on the same day that the inspections are conducted.

Even with the best planning and communications, it is sometimes necessary to request to move furniture in or stock goods prior to the CO being approved and issued. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and require the approval of the Building Official. A **Stocking Permit** may be issued for this purpose on a form available from the Code Enforcement Bureau, 703 838-4360. Before the request will be considered, installed fire alarm and/or sprinkler systems must have passed field acceptance tests. For residential requests, it is important to advise prospective homeowners that their household goods may not be covered by insurance (damage or theft) when the house has not yet gone to settlement. They may wish to check with their insurance company for advice on interim coverage. It is important to remember that an approved stocking permit is for goods only, it is not authorization for people to occupy or sleep in the structure.

While generally discouraged, it is sometimes possible for the Building Official to approve the temporary occupancy of a structure in accordance with section 116.1.1 of the USBC. In order for a temporary CO to be considered, the portion or portions of the structure to be occupied must not pose a danger to life or public welfare. This means that required fire alarm systems, suppression systems and/or sprinkler systems must be installed and have passed field acceptance tests; common area issues are completed, pertinent accessibility requirements are complete; and, that there are no access/egress issues which would endanger the building occupants. Usually, a temporary CO is considered when the building components have been approved, but there are outstanding site issues (ie: required landscaping or plants not installed; parking lot striping not completed, etc.) which prohibit the approval of a permanent CO by the review agencies. When requesting a temporary CO, appropriate time frames must still be considered as all review agencies must give their recommendations to the building official. **Approximately one week before the Temporary CO expiration date, the customer must call the Code Enforcement Bureau (703 838-4360) to schedule inspections with all agencies having outstanding issues.**

To eliminate confusion about what a Certificate of Occupancy looks like, a sample copy is attached. The CO should not be confused with final inspection tickets for issued building and trade permits.

If you have any questions about when a CO is required, applying for a CO, or the status of a CO in the inspection process, please call the Code Enforcement Bureau on **703 838-4360**.

**Remember:**

**No Issued CO = No Settlement/Grand Opening/Occupancy of the Building!**

## CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

In order to be ready for the CO inspection, please use the following agency checklist to make sure that the project is ready for CO approval. If you have any questions about what each City agency requires or will be inspecting for, please contact them on the telephone number provided. For disapproved inspections, please contact the disapproving agency to reschedule the inspection.

### **Planning & Zoning (requires 3-5 inspection days)**

**703 838-4666**

- Conditions of the approved Site Plan are met
- Conditions of the approved SUP are met
- Requirements are met for a released Plot Plan
- Height survey for additions and new single-family construction per SUP, DSUP, Site Plan or Plot Plan.  
Note: Height survey must be approved before CO will be issued.
- Plantings/landscaping
- Placement of exterior air conditioner condenser units
- Unit location survey is submitted and approved
- Size and Availability of Parking Spaces
- Special Paving Requirements are met
- Screening Requirements are met
- Fence Height and Design, where applicable, are appropriate
- No Obstruction to EAE
- Deck Size is in accordance with approved plans

### **Transportation & Environmental Services (requires 3-5 inspection days)**

**703 838-4324**

- Conditions of the approved Site Plan or Plot Plan are met
- Conditions of the approved SUP are met
- There is free access to the building to be occupied
- If applicable, fence area off to separate it from construction area
- Building number are posted
- Erosion and sediment control conditions of site plan are met
- Base pavement installed in roadways
- Storm and sanitary sewers are clean and functional (not blocked)
- Emergency Vehicle Easement signs are installed
- Fire Hydrants are installed and painted by Maintenance Division (703 838-4488)
- Handicapped Parking signs are installed - if required
- Street names signs are installed
- Street and site area are clean and free of mud and construction debris

### **Code Enforcement Bureau (requires 1-3 inspection days)**

**703 838-4360**

- All trade permits have received final approval
  - Electrical
  - Plumbing
  - Fire Protection Systems
    - Installed Fire Alarm/Detection and/or Sprinkler/Suppression system is operable
    - Knox Boxes are installed
- Building permit has received final approval
- House numbers are posted
- Emergency Vehicle Signs are posted
- Fire Prevention Code Permits are applied for areas of assembly (ie: Restaurants, Dining Areas; Party

Rooms; Meeting Rooms; etc.)

**Health Department (requires 3-5 inspection days)**

**703 838-4400**

• **Food Establishments**

- Installed kitchen, food preparation/storage/display equipment is installed & functional
- Hood system is installed and tested
- Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chap. 2, and the adopted FDA Food Code are met
- Adequate Lighting
- Plumbing fixtures installed properly (i.e: garbage disposal, grease interceptors)

• **Personal Hygiene Establishments**

- Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chap. 7 are met

• **Swimming Pools**

- Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chap. 20-6 are met

• **Massage Establishments**

- Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chap. 4.1 are met

• **Dry Cleaning or Coin Operated Laundry**

- Requirements of City Code, Title 9, Chap. 4 or 5 are met

**Housing (internal process; no field inspections conducted)**

**703 838-4990**

- Money obligated to Housing Trust Fund is paid

attachments - Sample CO and Temp CO

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**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**  
Code Enforcement Bureau  
301 King Street, Suite 4200  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
(703) 838-4360

# CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

**CASE NUMBER:** OCC2005-01234

**DATE ISSUED:** 12/27/2005

**MAX. OCCUPANCY** 8

SITE ADDRESS		PARCEL NO:
50181000		
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04
ZONING: CDD#9		TRACT: ?
PROPOSED USE: Residential		
USBC 2003		
OWNER:		
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:		NA
USE GROUP: R-3	<b>SAMPLE</b>	
CONSTRUCTION TYPE: 5A		
Sprinklered: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Modification: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Signed _____		
Building Official		

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**Mailing Address:**

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**  
Code Enforcement Bureau  
301 King Street, Suite 4200  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
(703) 838-4360

# TEMPORARY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

**CASE NUMBER:** OCC2005-01234

**DATE ISSUED:**

**MAX. OCCUPANCY** 7

<b>SITE ADDRESS</b>		<b>PARCEL NO:</b>
50181000		
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04
ZONING: CDD#9		TRACT: ?
PROPOSED USE: Residential		
USBC 2003 THIRTY DAY TEMPORARY C.O. ISSUED PENDING FINAL APPROVAL FROM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. TEMP C.O. EXPIRES MARCH 4, 2005.		
OWNER:		
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:	NA	
USE GROUP:	R-3	
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:	5A	
Sprinklered: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Modification: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Signed _____		
Building Official		

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**Mailing Address:**