Hello, Chapter Members!

Bear with me, because this is a long one. We have lots to share.

First off, cancellations: The April Chapter Meeting is cancelled, there is no May meeting scheduled, and we are rescheduling the spring golf tournament (more details soon).

Over the last couple of weeks, we’ve seen a rapidly changing landscape in the construction industry and numerous major changes in how we must run Building Inspection departments. Surveys have gone around, the NCTCOG Regional Codes Coordinating Committee met (virtually) yesterday, and ICC held a roundtable call for Chapters this morning. We’re scratching our heads to interpret ever-changing County orders, FAQs, clarifications, Governor’s orders, CDC guidelines, and the Department of Homeland Security’s recommendations. I don’t think I’ve ever had to put this much brain power into the definition of “essential.” It’s been requested that we solicit and share ideas of how Building departments have adjusted their operations with respect to COVID-19. Here are a few takeaways from recent conversations:

- It sounds like most of us have closed our doors to the public. Those that remain open to the public have taken measures to minimize exposure, including limiting the amount of people in their waiting area, escorting visitors, restricting areas of city buildings that are accessible, requiring social distancing for interactions at the counter, channeling customers to computer kiosks, providing personal protective equipment to office staff, and minimizing touch points in the passing of paperwork (no direct handoff, using drop-off boxes, and wearing gloves).

- Public relations is a key task. Update your permitting website promptly with any policy changes. Work with your city’s social media coordinator. Consider email pushes.

- Personal protective equipment is a must for employees on the front lines. Many of you know that masks and hand sanitizer aren’t easy to come by. Check with your city’s office of emergency management for procurement.

- Most cities are holding most or all their meetings remotely. Suggested software applications include Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Ring Central, Uber Conference, and Skype.
• Most cities have at least part of their staff working from home.
• Many cities are working in shifts – part of staff working from home and part in the office on any given day.
• Protection for inspectors
  o Some inspectors are working from their trucks instead of entering the office.
  o Some have modified their policies on entering occupied homes – some restricted in what they will inspect inside of a house, some doing these inspections virtually.
  o Use personal protection equipment. Better to be too cautious than not cautious enough.
• Online permitting – most cities have maximized their digital permitting capabilities. Many were already all-paperless. Some will end up all-paperless once this is all over!
• Virtual inspections: Cities are considering or starting to implement virtual inspections for certain inspection types, particularly in-home inspections. Face Time and Pro Tech Direct have been used. Plano and Irving have been using virtual inspections successfully.
• Consider web content or handouts educating contractors on the new regulations for construction workers. Consult your city attorney to establish your department’s power to enforce the rules.
• Some cities are requiring employees to be temperature-checked upon arrival to the office. This may be administered by Fire/EMS or by a representative in their department or building. Others are requiring employees to self-check before coming to work.
• Elective vs. Essential – Refer to TDEM and US DHS for Essential Businesses
  o Construction of new residential units is allowed.
  o Most agree that things like residential additions, gazebos, pools, kitchen remodels, etc. are non-essential.
  o The consensus leans toward most or all commercial being essential in some way.
  o DHS may be working on something more specific, so stay tuned for updates... as always.
• Updates from ICC
  o Building Safety Month will still go on, but virtual p.r. and events are encouraged. ICC has posters and other materials available in the ICC online bookstore.
  o The Chapter Leadership Academy and all in-person training by ICC in the near future are cancelled.
  o Use ICC’s online courses!!!!!! Some of you have a little bit more time on your hands these days, so what better time to get your CEUs from the comfort of your home or office! ICC is working hard to put more and more coursework online. We don’t have North Texas BPI this year, so here’s your chance to get educated.
If your certifications expire March through August of this year, the dates have been pushed back to September 1 to allow you more time for CEUs.

If you signed up for a certification test at Pearson Vue, you can contact ICC to have it changed to a PRONTO exam.

Most exams are offered online through PRONTO. Now’s the time to study and sign up for a test!

If your staff is working from home, this would be a good time to try Premium Access online codes.

If your department has something more to add to this, please let us know. If you have any questions, we’ll try to answer them or solicit responses from the group.

Many are looking forward to getting back to normal, but I’m not. I’m looking forward to getting back to “better”... better at public relations, more educated, more flexible, up to date on s.o.p.s, more tech-savvy, more hygienic, and more appreciative of human contact. I hope you do, too.

Your NTC ICC Board of Directors,

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