

## Code Enforcement Terminology

### Violation Letters

Violation letters are Code Enforcement's initial means of contacting potential code violators. There are a few different versions:

- Violation 1 letters are sent by Code Enforcement within 30 days of receiving a complaint.
- Violation 2 letters are sent after a violation(s) has been confirmed.
- Violation 3 letters are sent to document an informal compliance agreement between Code Enforcement and the property owner.

### Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA)

After a Code Enforcement Officer has confirmed a violation, the property owner can work out an agreement with Code Enforcement to bring the property into compliance. This agreement is recorded on the title of the property.

### Notice and Order (N&O)

These documents give a legal description of the violations and set compliance deadlines. Notices and Orders are issued only after Violation Letters and collaboration with a Code Enforcement Officer have failed to bring a property into voluntarily compliance.

### Appeal

After a Notice and Order has been issued, every property owner has the right to appeal the violations confirmed on the property. The appeal is heard by a King County Hearing Examiner. If the appeal is upheld, the Notice and Order is dismissed and a Certificate of Compliance is issued. If the appeal is denied, the property owner is given a new mandatory compliance schedule. If that schedule is not met, assessment of civil penalties begins.

## Code Enforcement Terminology, Cont.

### Civil Penalties

If a property remains out of compliance with the code past the deadlines outlined in a Notice and Order, or VCA, the property owner starts incurring daily penalties. The amounts depend on the specific violations and are included in the Notice and Order or VCA. The fines accumulate every day the property remains in violation up to a maximum of 60 days. The daily fine amount doubles for the final 30 days. If civil penalties are not paid in a timely manner, the county will obtain a lien against the subject property. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office may also obtain a civil judgment.

### Abatement

If there is no compliance after a Notice and Order or VCA and Civil Penalties, King County has the right to bring the property into compliance. Abatement means that the county brings the property into compliance and the expense is transferred to the property owner. In most cases, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office will obtain a Superior Court Order prior to county representatives entering private property.

### Certificate of Compliance

Code compliance is the main objective of the Code Enforcement process. A Certificate of Compliance is issued whenever a property owner corrects all code violations cited in the N&O or VCA. Compliance can be achieved at virtually any time by the property owner. A Certificate of Compliance closes the case and ends the enforcement process. Civil penalties may still be due.

### King County Department of Development and Environmental Services

Code Enforcement Section  
900 Oakesdale Ave. S.W.  
Renton, WA 98057-5212  
PDPS Customer Service: 206-296-6600  
Code Enforcement Section Message Line: 206-296-6680  
Code Enforcement Fax Number: 206-296-6604



Working  
with  
Code Enforcement  
on Your  
Property



King County

## What is Code Enforcement?

King County Code Enforcement is a function within the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDSES) that enforces building and land use regulations set forth in King County Code. Code Enforcement officers investigate complaints of unlawful and hazardous development and issues on private property. Code Enforcement responds to reported code violations associated with zoning, housing and building, shorelines, and critical areas. The Code Enforcement workload is almost entirely driven by the complaints of private citizens. Code Enforcement Officers do not proactively survey the county looking for violations.

If, as a property owner, you have been contacted by King County Code Enforcement because of a violation in any of the aforementioned areas, it is important for you to understand the Code Enforcement process. This pamphlet outlines that process, and also explains your choices and opportunities as a property owner.

This pamphlet also outlines all the potential steps in the lifecycle of a code enforcement case. It is important to understand that property owners may correct the violation at any given point in the process and therefore resolve the case. The first priority and preference of code enforcement officers is to work in partnership with a property owner in the earliest stages of the code enforcement process in order to bring a property into compliance with the pertinent code(s).

## How Does Code Enforcement Benefit the Community?

- Ensures safe living conditions.
- Safeguards the environment, protecting people, wildlife, and livestock.
- Keeps land free from garbage.
- Protects neighborhood real estate values from unsightly and unsafe environmental destruction and accumulation of junk vehicles.

## I Have Received a Violation 1 Letter.

### What Happens Next?

#### Your Next Actions

Contact your Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) by phone or e-mail. You can find your CEO's contact information at the bottom of the Violation 1 Letter.

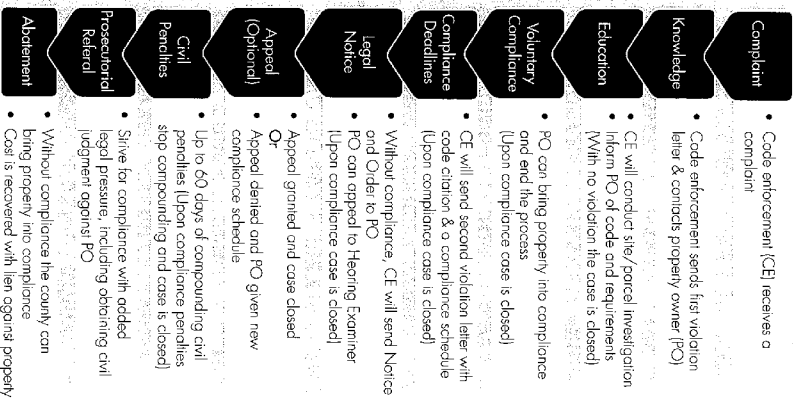
#### Code Enforcement's Next Actions

If we do not hear from you, a Code Enforcement Officer will make a site visit. The officer will determine if the complaint is valid or not. If it is not, the matter will be closed. If the complaint is valid, we will work with you to bring your property into compliance.

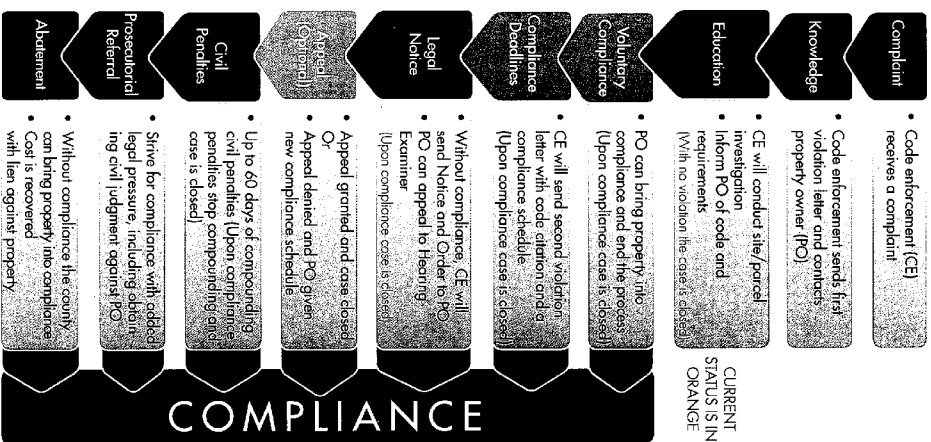
#### How to Contact Code Enforcement

King County Department of Development and Environmental Services  
Code Enforcement Section  
900 Oakesdale Ave, S.W.  
Renton, WA 98057-5212  
DDSES Customer Service: 206-296-6600  
Code Enforcement Section Message Line:  
206-296-6680  
Code Enforcement Fax Number: 206-296-6604

## The Code Enforcement Process and Opportunities for Compliance



## The Code Enforcement Process and Opportunities for Compliance



### Citations

Code Enforcement has the authority to issue a citation for certain violations.

A citation carries one instant \$100 civil penalty, but can go up to \$500 for noncompliance. In certain cases, a citation will be issued in place of a Violation 2 Letter.

Property owners have appeal rights for citations that are outlined on the citation form.

### How to Look Up the Status of a Complaint

1. Visit the following web site and enter the case number or parcel number:  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/des/permits/reports/>

2. E-mail DDES Code Enforcement at [WebComplaints:CodeEnforcement@kingcounty.gov](mailto:WebComplaints:CodeEnforcement@kingcounty.gov), or reach the Code Enforcement message line at 206-296-6680.

King County Department of Development and Environmental Services  
 Code Enforcement Section  
 900 Oakesdale Ave. S.W.  
 Renton, WA 98057-5212  
 DDES Customer Service: 206-296-6600  
 Code Enforcement Section Message Line: 206-296-6680  
 Code Enforcement Fax Number: 206-296-6604



How to Comply with King County Code



King County

## I Have Received a Violation 2 (Vio2) Letter. What Is It?

The Vio2 Letter informs property owners that violations are confirmed on their property. It also lists which section(s) of the King County Code the property is violating.

For a full copy of the King County Code, visit: [http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc\\_code.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code.aspx).

## What Do I Do After Receiving a Vio2 Letter?

Learn what is required to bring your property into compliance with King County Code. You can find information about how to do this in the Vio2 Letter and by referencing the King County Code through the website listed above.

If you have questions, the best person to contact is the Code Enforcement Officer assigned to your case. You will find his or her email address and phone number in the Vio2 Letter.

## Photographic Example of Compliance



## What Are My Options?

### Voluntary Compliance

Voluntary compliance can be accomplished by working with your Code Enforcement Officer and following the compliance schedule outlined in your Vio2 Letter. You also have the option to enter into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement.

### Voluntary Compliance Agreement

The Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) is a legal document. It is recorded against your property title until compliance is achieved. In the VCA, you acknowledge the violations that exist on your property and agree to bring them into compliance based upon a compliance schedule jointly set by you and the county. The VCA will include:

- A list of violations on the property
- An agreed-upon compliance schedule
- An outline of civil penalties for noncompliance

The ultimate goal is to achieve compliance with King County Code. Code compliance is primarily achieved through a voluntary process or a legal process.

### Legal Process / Notice and Order

If you choose not to follow the compliance schedule outlined in the Vio2 Letter, or you do not believe your property is in violation of King County Code, the next step for your case is a legal notice to comply, also known as a Notice and Order.

### VCA Legal Process

If you choose to enter into a VCA to bring your property into compliance, your appeal process is as follows:

- Code Enforcement staff conduct a compliance inspection of the agreed-upon compliance date.
- If the property is not in compliance with the VCA, the officer will issue a notice of Non-Compliance (NONC).
- The NONC is also a legal document which lists the violations that remain on your property and the civil penalties that will be assessed for continued noncompliance.
- After the NONC is issued, the county may begin to assess civil penalties.
- As the property owner, you have the right to appeal the NONC, but not the existence of code violations.
- If a NONC is not appealed or an appeal is unsuccessful, DDES will assess civil penalties and abate the remaining violations at the property owner's expense.

### Notice and Order

The Notice and Order is a legal document that is recorded against your property title. The Notice and Order will include:

- A list of violations on the property
- A compliance schedule
- Information about your appeal rights
- An outline of civil penalties for noncompliance
- Notice that a lien will be placed against your property if civil penalties are assessed
- Information on the County's legal authority to abate your property

Please read the Notice and Order carefully and ask questions to ensure that you understand your rights and responsibilities.

### Notice and Order Appeal

The Notice and Order appeal process gives you an opportunity to challenge the determination that violations exist on your property.

Appeals must be received by the department by the deadline specified in the Notice and Order to be considered timely. Ultimately, you must come into compliance by the deadline specified in the Notice and Order. Civil penalties accrue for noncompliance.

A helpful guide to the appeal process is included with your Notice and Order.

## Contacting Code Enforcement

### Web Site

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/ce.aspx>

### On Line Complaint Form

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/ce/complaints/cebform.aspx>

### Phone

Code Enforcement Office:  
206-296-6680

After Hours,  
Urgent Code Enforcement Complaint Line:  
1-888-437-4771

### FAX

Department of Development and Environmental  
Services:  
206-296-6604

### E-mail

[WebComplaints.CodeEnforcement@kingcounty.gov](mailto:WebComplaints.CodeEnforcement@kingcounty.gov)

### Mailing Address

Department of Development and  
Environmental Services (DDES)  
Code Enforcement Section  
900 Oakesdale Ave. S.W.  
Renton, WA 98057-5212

### To Request a Pre-Application Meeting for Already-Built Construction (ABC Permit)

DDES Customer Service Center:  
206-296-6797

### How to Register a Complaint:

To report a complaint about a building, land use or environmental code violation in unincorporated King County:

- Complete the Code Enforcement On Line Complaint Form at : [www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/ce/complaints/cebform.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/ce/complaints/cebform.aspx); or
- Call 206-296-6680 during regular business hours; or
- Send a letter to DDES Code Enforcement at:  
DDES Code Enforcement  
900 Oakesdale Ave. S.W.  
Renton, WA 98057-5212

- For emergencies (activities happening now that may cause irreparable environmental damage or create a safety concern) occurring on weekends, holidays, or other hours, call 1-888-437-4771.

### How to Look Up the Status of a Complaint:

- Visit the following website and enter the case number or parcel number:  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dses/permits/reports>

**Our Jurisdiction:** DDES Code Enforcement investigates zoning, building and land use complaints only in the unincorporated area of King County. If a property in question is located within a city limit (Seattle, Issaquah, Kent, etc.), that city must be contacted directly in order to file a complaint or research zoning regulations. For links to local cities and towns as well as state agencies, go to [www.kingcounty.gov/ohlink.htm](http://www.kingcounty.gov/ohlink.htm).

## Introduction

to

## Code

## Enforcement

in

## King County



King County

King County Department of Development  
and Environmental Services

Code Enforcement Section  
900 Oakesdale Ave. S.W.

Renton, WA 98055

DDES Customer Service: 206-296-6600  
Code Enforcement Section: 206-296-6680



## Code Enforcement is Helping Communities

King County Code Enforcement is a function within the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDSES) that enforces building and land use regulations set forth in King County Code. Code Enforcement Officers investigate complaints of unlawful and hazardous developments and uses. We respond to reported code violations associated with zoning, housing and building, shorelines, and critical areas.

The work conducted by Code Enforcement yields many positive results in our community. For example, property owners contacted by Code Enforcement with illegal construction or clearing and grading activity can retroactively engage the permit review process at DDSES. The permitting process is designed to protect public health, homeowner safety and the environment by ensuring that construction and grading activity meets acceptable standards. In the past, other counties have seen deck collapses resulting in injury and even death. Similarly, structures built in areas susceptible to heavy snows are required to sustain specific snow loads in order to prevent collapse. A more common example of unpermitted activity is a garage illegally converted into living space. In addition to safety and structural considerations, this can create burdens for which an associated septic system was never designed, leading to septic system failure.

Properties which are used in a manner inconsistent with the applied zoning can cause visual blight in neighborhoods, disturb traffic patterns, and also damage the natural environment. Complaints about junk cars are among the most frequent calls made to Code Enforcement. These sites are visually disturbing to neighbors and can affect property sales. The oil and other fluids associated with junk cars can also leach into the ground, contaminating the soil.

Another example of a zoning infraction is unlawful home businesses. Home occupations which are inconsistent with the property's zoning can disturb traffic patterns, create excessive noise, and cause safety hazards from overflow parking.

This is an excellent example of voluntary compliance that was achieved through partnership between the property owner and code enforcement.



Above: before Below: after



## The Code Enforcement Process

Code Enforcement complaints can be registered by filling out the online complaint form, calling the complaint line, faxing, mailing, or emailing a written complaint. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Code Enforcement Office will gather basic property information and assign a case number to the complaint. Complaints are then routed to a specific Code Enforcement Officer for investigation. Initial contact with a reported violator generally occurs within 30 days of receiving a complaint, although environmental hazards and other high priority cases are investigated as quickly as possible, usually within 48 hours.

Some violations are quick to resolve, while others take more time due to their complexity. Code Enforcement Officers work with property owners in an attempt to educate them about the specific code requirements which apply to their property. The first priority is always to achieve voluntary compliance with County codes. If the property owner is willing to work with the officer, then both parties agree to a compliance schedule. If the violator is a repeat offender or is unwilling to bring the property into compliance, the officer will issue a Notice and Order, which typically includes civil penalties and the possibility of a lien on the property. The order may be appealed to the King County Hearing Examiner and scheduled for a public hearing.

In some extreme cases, the Code Enforcement Office may abate the violation by hiring a contractor to clean up the property. At the abatement phase, the property owner is responsible for the cost of the cleanup. If this cost is not paid at the time of clean-up, a lien will be placed on the property.

## Community-Oriented Code Enforcement

Each Code Enforcement Officer is assigned to work in a specific geographic area. Officers work in partnership with local communities to establish case priorities and to communicate about local Code Enforcement efforts. If you would like an officer to speak at your community group, simply call: 206-296-6680.