



NEWS RELEASE

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CITY OF BEND TO COMPLETE PILOT PROGRAM FOR BUILDING PERMIT, LICENSING, AND INSPECTION COMPLIANCE THIS MONTH

(Bend) A pilot project aimed at increasing the number of unannounced visits builders, electricians and plumbers working in central Oregon receive from building inspectors will end with the June 30 expiration of an agreement between the City of Bend and the state Building Codes Division. The project was designed to increase compliance with license, permit, and inspection requirements on construction projects. Contractors who don't meet these requirements may face fines or other administrative penalties.

The pilot began in January of this year, with Bend officials agreeing to conduct unannounced inspections in Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties. A more extensive pilot project is also underway in Washington County and has been continued at the county's request through the end of 2001. Bend was given the option of continuing its pilot as well, but chose to stick with the timeframe provided in the original agreement.

Under the pilot project city building officials were granted access to the same range of enforcement options available to the BCD administrator. In effect, the city was authorized to act on behalf of the administrator, the state Electrical and Elevator Board, and the state Plumbing Board. Local building authorities normally do not have all of the enforcement powers available to the state and must refer certain compliance cases to state investigators.

Local building inspectors operating within the project had the authority to investigate violations, enforce compliance, and serve notice of proposed civil penalties. The state, in turn, agreed to take into account repeat violations of local compliance ordinances when it initiates action to revoke or suspend an individual's or contractor's license.

The project was also designed to test the effectiveness of having the local jurisdiction make random license and permit checks for electrical, plumbing, structural, mechanical, and manufactured home installations. This is in addition to the compliance activities local building inspectors pursue as part of their regular inspection duties.

"We appreciate the work the city has done on this project, especially given that they don't have extensive resources to devote to an effort like this," BCD Administrator Joe Brewer said. "We'll take some time when the project closes at the end of June to evaluate the results and discuss them with local officials and the building industry – in addition to looking at the on-going program in Washington County – to see if programs like this could be beneficial to other communities around the state."

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