

April 23, 2020

Staff Site Visits during the COVID-19 Outbreak

The purpose of this communication is to explain how Nicollet County Property Services (NCPS) will respond to inspections, complaints, and site visits during the COVID-19 outbreak. NCPS is committed to the health, safety, and welfare of the public, contractors, and staff. NCPS is also committed to continuing to provide the community with the essential services delivered by NCPS.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Nicollet County has implemented employee education and practices aimed at reducing the spread of the virus, such as:

- Hand hygiene, hand washing, and sanitizing
- Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing
- Social distancing
- Staying home when sick
- Minimizing public access to County facilities

County employees will be observing these measures, and staff asks that our partners in the construction industry, business owners, and homeowners also commit to the recommended measures listed for limiting transmission of the virus.

NCPS staff will **only be doing essential site visits and inspections until further notice**. Site visits will be limited to a last resort when all other options have been exhausted, or in the event of an emergency situation. Essential site visits include the following:

- Inspection services for septic system installations and soil verifications.
- Complaint investigation at sites that provide a safe environment for staff to be physically present. If the environment is not safe, the investigation will reconvene at a later date when a safe environment is present.
- If compliance verification cannot be achieved in office and all other options have been exhausted.

Inspections will be done in a way to reduce time together and to increase contact distance between staff and others present on the site. This protocol will apply to a majority of situations, although not all, and additional discussion will need to take place prior to action.

Mission Statement

Providing efficient services with innovation and accountability.

Vision Statement

Setting the standard for providing superior and efficient county government services through leadership, accountability and innovation to a growing and diverse society.

Core Values

Leadership. Integrity.
Accountability.
Efficiency. Innovation.

Please call (507) 934-7070 for the general office. Your call be transferred to appropriate staff as needed, or you can email; [Nicollet County Permitting Applications <niccolletpermitapps@co.nicollet.mn.us>](mailto:niccolletpermitapps@co.nicollet.mn.us) to schedule an inspection at least 24 hours in advance. Staff may be working off-site, and may require longer preparation time than normal to get location maps and paperwork ready for a site visit.

The following protocol must be adhered to by the construction industry, homeowners, and business owners during any site visits:

- Social distancing of a minimum of six feet will be observed, additional Center for Disease Control guidelines may also be implemented if deemed appropriate. No equipment will be shared. Staff will forego signatures on all forms while onsite. If necessary, paperwork will be sent by email within 72 hours for signature.
- The individual(s) intended to meet staff cannot be sick or showing any symptoms of a cold or the flu. Individuals who are not pertinent to the purpose of the site visit are asked to remain out of the area until the site visit has been completed. This will ensure proper social distancing and minimize the congregating of people.
- When a site visit is requested, staff will ask the individual requesting the visit whether these safety practices will be in place before staff arrives onsite, as well as who will be onsite at the time of visit.
- Area in question must be properly staked or marked to facilitate prompt inspection and verification.
- Payment will NOT be collected onsite. Payment must be received before work is started for a permit to be issued. Payment can be in the form of a check mailed to NCPS or by calling NCPS with credit card information. (Credit card company convenience fee will be added). Permits and receipts will be sent out by email for signatures. Signatures must be returned by email (preferred) or by mail.

In order to minimize opportunities for spread of the virus during the COVID-19 outbreak, staff are authorized to be situationally flexible, limiting inspections to only those absolutely necessary and, when possible and practical, using photographs, video, virtual meetings, and other methods to observe and document that work is compliant with code requirements.

Nicollet County is committed, above all, to the health and safety of the community. The COVID-19 outbreak presents challenges to all of us as we work to build a safe community. Working together, we can keep construction projects moving forward, while doing our best to reduce risks of the spread of the virus.

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