



Washoe County Code Compliance

Planning & Building Division
Community Services Department

Common Questions

Washoe County Code Compliance Mission Statement:

Washoe County Code Compliance provides sensitive, courteous, and efficient services designed to ensure a good quality of life for all unincorporated Washoe County residents and property owners. These services protect the health, safety and welfare of County residents through fair and impartial enforcement of the Washoe County Business Code (WCC Chapter 25), the Liquor and Gaming License Code (WCC Chapter 30), the Nuisance Code (WCC Chapter 50), the Building Code (WCC Chapter 100) and the Development Code (WCC Chapter 110). Enforcement emphasizes voluntary compliance, followed when necessary by proper legal procedures. These legal procedures are principally through the County's Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC Chapter 125), but may result in a misdemeanor criminal action or in civil action through a Court if warranted.

General Code Compliance Questions

1. Which County Codes does Planning & Building Division staff enforce?

Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs) enforce three different types of regulations within the unincorporated areas of Washoe County. The three types of regulations are:

1. Land use, zoning and grading regulations within the Washoe County Development Code (WCC Chapter 110).
2. Building regulations within WCC Chapter 100.
3. Certain nuisance code regulations within WCC Chapter 50.
4. Business, gaming and liquor license regulations within WCC Chapter 25 and WCC Chapter 30.

Washoe County regulates land uses, buildings, businesses and nuisances to protect the public's health and safety. The County seeks to remedy any infractions of County Code by voluntary compliance whenever possible. To this end, a CEO will give notice of any Code infractions to a tenant, occupant, property owner, contractor and/or business owner with a time period to rectify or remedy any issues on a property or with a business. If compliance is not achieved by the time provided, the CEO will enforce the County's regulations through the following methods:

- *Administrative Enforcement.* The preferred method to enforce County regulations is through the administrative process enabled by the Washoe County Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC Chapter 125). The Code provides for administrative penalties when a property or business does not comply with County

regulations, balanced with opportunities for an administrative hearing upon an appeal. See question 8 of this handout for more details on the administrative enforcement process.

- *Misdemeanor Criminal Citation.* When warranted, the CEO may issue a misdemeanor criminal citation when a property or business does not comply with County regulations. This usually occurs when the administrative enforcement process does not result in code compliance after several attempts. The Washoe County Board of County Commissioners is enabled by State Law (NRS 171.17751) to designate certain staff to prepare, sign, and serve written criminal citations. The County Commission has designated the CEOs to issue citations within provisions of WCC Chapters 25, 30, 50, 100 and 110. See question 9 of this handout for more details on the criminal citation process.
- *Civil court process.* The CEO partners with the Washoe County District Attorney's Office to bring a civil action through District Court against the property or business. This process is used when the administrative enforcement process fails to achieve code compliance, and when the criminal process is not a viable option. The County's goal through any civil court process is to ask the Court to issue an order requiring certain actions to be completed in order to gain code compliance.

2. What types of County Code violations does Planning and Building staff enforce?

As noted earlier, Planning & Building Division code compliance staff enforce land use (to include zoning and grading), building, engineering, license (business, gaming and liquor), and certain nuisance regulations within the unincorporated County. The most prevalent land use (zoning) County Code violations investigated and enforced by the CEO's include:

- Outdoor storage of a commercial vehicle and/or commercial equipment on a residentially zoned property.
- Cargo and/or rental storage containers which do not meet placement and/or development standards, and/or permit requirements.
- Living or sleeping in a recreational vehicle or travel trailer.
- Storage of an unoccupied manufactured or mobile home.
- Grading of land not authorized by County Code, to include the import or export of earth material or fill in excess of 50 cubic yards.

Building violations typically include:

- Constructing or erecting a building or structure over 200 square feet in size without the appropriate building permit.
- Any building or structure that is dangerous or in disrepair.

Engineering violations typically include:

- Drainage or storm water issues from one property onto another.

Business license violations typically include:

- Operating a business in the unincorporated County without a valid Washoe County business license.

- Violation of a home-based business license requirement or development standard.

Nuisance violations typically include:

- Outdoor storage of junk vehicles, building material, appliances, and/or debris in public view.
- Maintenance of a property in such a state of disrepair or deterioration that could cause damage to other property or improvements, or cause or contribute to blight and a substantial reduction in the value of neighboring properties.
- Excessive foliage and/or other nuisance conditions on the exterior of any foreclosed residential property.

3. I did not see my complaint on the types of Code violations enforced by the Planning & Building Division. Who do I contact for other types of County Code violations?

Frequently, the Division receives complaints on other types of County Code violations of which the CEOs have no authority to either investigate or enforce. The following complaints may be registered on-line at onenv.us or by telephone at the number provided.

- **Solid waste, trash, refuse, rubbish and/or garbage** on a property (Health District at 775.328.2434).
- Vector problems (e.g., rodents or mosquitoes) on a property (Health District at 775.328.2434).

The following County agencies should be contacted directly by telephone at the number provided for the following complaints:

- Animals at large or noisy animals (Regional Animal Services at 775.322.3647).
- Junk vehicles on public roads (Sheriff's Office at 775.328-3001).
- Noise from off-road vehicles; or any off-road vehicle operating within 1,000 feet of a residence (Sheriff's Office at 775.328.3001).
- Trespassers on a foreclosed property (Sheriff's Office at 775.328.3001).
- Obstructing a public road or trail (Sheriff's Office at 775.328.3001).
- Overgrown vegetation or weeds (Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District at 775.326.6000 or North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District at 775.831.0351).

4. How do I report a potential violation of the County's land use, business license and/or nuisance regulations?

There are several methods to report a land use, business license, or nuisance code violation or complaint:

- On-line at the [ONE Regional Licensing and Permits Portal](#).
- Call the Code Compliance hotline at 775.328.6106;
- Visit the Community Services Department information counter (located on the second floor of Building A, Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street in Reno): **OR**,

- Mail a letter to: Washoe County Community Services Department, Planning & Building Attn: Code Compliance, PO Box 11130, Reno, Nevada 89520-0027;

Washoe County encourages you to use the on-line complaint portal. If you cannot report the complaint on-line, then please provide the following information:

- Your name, address, and phone number,
- The address of the potential violation,
- The violator's name, if known,
- The type(s) of violation(s); and,
- Any details that might assist the CEO when investigating the complaint.

You may report a complaint and remain anonymous; however, code compliance staff prefers to have your name, address, and phone number to initiate a compliance case. We will use your personal information to contact you if we have additional questions, to provide a status of the case, to notify you if we determine that the complaint is not within our jurisdiction (e.g., falls within the City's boundaries), or to notify you if the matter is not within our scope of authority.

Your personal information (specifically, your name, address, and phone number) becomes part of the public record pertaining to the compliance case and will be released as part of the case file when fulfilling a public records request from a citizen. In certain cases, your personal information may be treated as sensitive information if the compliance case is being handled through the criminal enforcement process. In these types of cases, your information will not be released pursuant to a public records request until the case is closed.

5. How quickly will a Code Compliance Officer respond to a complaint?

The Department's business standard requires a CEO visit the site of a potential violation within three business days after our offices receive the complaint. However, in the majority of complaint cases, the CEO will visit the property by the next business day.

6. How can I find out what action has been taken in response to my complaint?

You can check on the status of a complaint on-line at the [ONE Regional Licensing and Permits Portal](#) by searching on the address or Assessor's Parcel Number, or the complaint or violation case number (if known) of the subject (complaint) property. Alternatively, you can call the Code Compliance hotline at 775.328.6106 and provide staff with the address of the reported Code violation, or the complaint or violation case number (if known). Code Compliance staff is usually able to provide information on the complaint based on the information entered into the code compliance data base. Frequently, the CEO will also contact you directly to provide you with an update on the status or progress of the complaint.

7. How do I know if the location of a potential Code violation is within unincorporated Washoe County?

You can determine if a property is located within the unincorporated County by using Washoe County's on-line Quick Map application. The web address is <http://wcgisweb.washoecounty.us/QuickMap>.

- Enter the property's address or the Assessor's Parcel Number and then click on the "search" button. The resulting side bar will contain property specific information.
- The entry noted as "Area:" shows the property's jurisdiction (i.e., Reno, Sparks or unincorporated Washoe County).

You may also call the Code Compliance Hotline at 775.328.6106 or the Planning Counter at 775.328.6100 with the street address and/or Assessor's Parcel Number of the potential Code violation.

- You can obtain the Assessor's Parcel Number by contacting the Washoe County Assessor's Office at 775.328.2277.
- Planning & Building staff will help you determine the jurisdiction within which the location of the potential Code violation lies.

If the property is within the City limits of either Reno or Sparks, please contact those agencies directly with code compliance complaints or issues:

- City of Reno: 775.334.4636 or renodirect@reno.gov
- City of Sparks: 775.353.4063

8. What is the County's administrative enforcement process and how does it work?

The Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC sections 125.120 through 125.315) allows a CEO to follow an administrative process to correct County Code violations, rather than issuing a misdemeanor criminal citation. Administrative enforcement allows a tenant, occupant, property owner, contractor, or business owner to comply with County Code regulations without the potential for a conviction by a criminal court and a subsequent criminal history record. Administrative enforcement provides for a progressive increase in penalties should a property or business not voluntarily comply with regulations.

Overview of the administrative enforcement process:

The CEO will send a warning when a property owner or business is in violation of County regulations. The warning may be given orally or in writing. Division policy is to follow any oral warning with a written warning. The warning provides an opportunity for voluntary compliance and will be sent to the person deemed most responsible to correct the problem. This person could be a tenant, an occupant, a property owner, a contractor, and/or a business owner depending on the situation and the code violation. If a tenant or occupant fails to respond to the warning, then the CEO will issue the warning to the property owner.

The warning details the County Code violation (or violations) and provides actions which must be taken to correct the violation (or violations). The CEO will allow *no more than 30* calendar days to correct the code violation (or violations). A person may contact the CEO orally or in writing to request an extension of time to comply with the warning. The CEO

may *only* grant an extension of time request if there has been demonstrated progress in correcting the code violation (or violations) or if there are extenuating circumstances which prevent a person from achieving code compliance. The CEO will work with the person to develop a compliance plan with time frames for any granted extensions.

If the code violation (or violations) is not corrected by the date shown on the warning, or within the time frame from a granted extension, the CEO will issue an administrative penalty notice.

The first administrative penalty notice results in an automatic penalty of \$100. The code violation (or violations) must still be corrected. Payment of the \$100 penalty *within* 30 calendar days allows the County to accept one-half of the payment (\$50) as payment in full. Penalties not paid within the 30 calendar days will be turned over to the Washoe County Collections Office. The Collections Office will include a required \$50 collections fee to the full penalty amount of \$100, both of which must be paid by the person who received the administrative penalty notice. The Collections Office may also charge additional fees and/or interest and impose other collection remedies.

A person may appeal the administrative penalty notice within the 30 day payment period. Appeals are made directly to the Administrative Hearing Office and information is provided on the administrative penalty notice on how to contact the Hearing Office (see section below on Administrative Hearings).

The CEO will inspect the property or business after the first administrative penalty notice to determine if a code violation (or violations) still exists. Uncorrected code violations will cause the CEO to issue a second warning. Failure to correct the code violations with the second warning will result in a \$200 penalty with a second administrative penalty notice. In serious cases, the second \$200 administrative penalty notice may be issued without a second warning.

Failure to correct the code violation (or violations) with the second administrative penalty notice will cause the CEO to issue a \$400 penalty with a third administrative penalty notice, with or without a third warning. The CEO may also elect to charge additional administrative action fees, such as a \$25 inspection fee for each visit to the property or business, when code violations remain.

Subsequent administrative penalty notices for uncorrected code violations will result in a \$400 penalty for the fourth or each subsequent notice. Additionally, administrative action fees may be added to the penalty.

Administrative Hearings:

Any administrative penalty notice may be appealed within 30 calendar days. Appeals are made directly to the Administrative Hearing Office and information is provided on the administrative penalty notice on how to contact the Hearing Office. Payment is held in abeyance until the Hearing Officer renders a decision on the appeal. If the person is found in violation of County Codes at the end of the appeal, then the full penalty amount (i.e., \$100, \$200 or \$400) must be paid and an additional \$50 administrative hearing fee will be added to the penalty.

The Hearing Officer will issue an Administrative Order requiring the person to complete certain actions to correct the code violations, and the Order may impose additional penalties, fees, and/or costs. Failure to obey the order is a misdemeanor criminal offense. Failure to pay all penalties, fees, and/or costs by the date specified in the Order will result in turning over the unpaid amounts to the Collections Office.

9. How does the County enforce regulations through the Criminal Court system?

Although the administrative enforcement process is the preferred method to enforce land use, building, licensing, and certain nuisance code violations, the CEO may issue a misdemeanor criminal citation. Such citations are usually issued when:

- The administrative enforcement process fails to bring a property or business into code compliance.
- A person fails to obey an Administrative Order issued by a hearing officer.
- A code violation poses a serious threat to the public's health or safety.

In these circumstances, the CEO may issue a misdemeanor criminal citation to the tenant, occupant, property owner, contractor, and/or business owner. The citation requires the violator to appear in the appropriate Washoe County Justice Court at a specific date and time. Failure to appear will result in the Court issuing a bench warrant for the violator's arrest.

When the violator appears at Court, the Court will allow the violator to enter a plea on the case. A plea of Not Guilty will result in the Court setting a date and time for a Justice of the Peace (Judge) to hear the case. A plea of Guilty results in the Court setting an appropriate punishment for the violation, usually a monetary fine. If the case proceeds to a hearing, the Judge will hear the case using standard criminal court proceedings (for example, representation by legal representatives, admission of evidence, witness testimony). The Judge will render a decision at the conclusion of the case. Failure to follow the Judge's order will result in additional criminal punishment. Conviction of a misdemeanor criminal offense results in a criminal history record for the violator.

Punishment for conviction of a misdemeanor criminal offense is set according to WCC section 125.050 (a maximum fine of \$1,000 and/or a maximum jail sentence of six months). Each day that the violation persists is a separate violation and the CEO may issue a written misdemeanor criminal citation for each day the violation remains uncorrected

10. Why does the County follow an administrative enforcement process and not take all code violations to Criminal Court?

Conviction of a misdemeanor criminal offense does not guarantee that the violation has been corrected. The punishments allowed pursuant to County Code (jail time and/or fines) may provide an incentive for a person to correct a code violation, but they do not by themselves remedy or rectify the actual code violation. Often at the conclusion of a criminal court case, the violation remains uncorrected and the CEO must start a new case on the violation, to include mandated minimum notice times to comply with County Codes.

Additionally, conviction of a misdemeanor criminal offense leaves the violator with a criminal history record. The County prefers to avoid following an enforcement path that may result in a criminal history record for these types of County Code violations; therefore, the administrative enforcement process is the preferred enforcement process.

The administrative enforcement process provides for mandatory monetary penalties if a code violation is not corrected. Additionally, the penalties increase in amount the longer that a violation remains uncorrected. These penalties often serve as motivation for a person to correct the violation to avoid paying not only the penalty, but associated administrative fees and costs.

The administrative enforcement process also enables the County to abate code violations when those violations pose a serious threat to the public's health, safety or welfare. Abatement empowers the County to enter a property or business, with or without prior notice, to perform actions required to correct or remedy code violations. Costs of the abatement, to include equipment and personnel costs, are charged directly to the property or business owner. This enforcement tool is a powerful incentive for a property or business owner to voluntarily correct code violations in order to avoid the actions and costs associated with abatement.

The goal of administrative enforcement is to enable a person to voluntarily comply with Washoe County Code regulations through adequate warnings or notices. Warnings and notices explain the code violations, provide recommended actions to correct the violations, and set a time frame for compliance. It is only when those warnings or notices do not result in code compliance that the stricter measures of administrative enforcement are used.

11. How long does it take to resolve a violation of the County's land use, license, building, or certain nuisance regulations?

Administrative Enforcement:

County Code requires that a CEO initially allow a person no more than 30 calendar days to correct a code violation with a warning (either written or orally). Division policy is for the CEO to allow the full 30 calendar days for first time offenders. A person may contact the CEO orally or in writing to request an extension of time to comply with the warning. The CEO may *only* grant an extension of time request if there has been demonstrated progress in correcting the code violation (or violations) or if there are extenuating circumstances which prevent a person from achieving code compliance. The CEO will work with the person to develop a compliance plan with time frames for any granted extensions.

If the code violation is not corrected by the date shown on the warning, or within the time frame from a granted extension, the CEO will issue an administrative penalty notice. The first notice will impose an automatic monetary penalty of \$100. Additional administrative action fees and costs may be added to the penalty and must be paid by the person who received the notice.

County Code does not require a warning to be issued with a second or subsequent administrative penalty notice. This means that a second notice could be issued immediately after the first notice should the code violation remain uncorrected. Division

policy, however, is to provide a second warning and to allow at least 30 calendar days for first time offenders to correct the code violation. A person may request an extension of time as discussed above. If the code violation remains uncorrected at the end of that second 30 day period, then the CEO will issue the second administrative notice (an automatic monetary penalty of \$200). Again, additional administrative action fees and costs may be added to the penalty.

If the code violation remains uncorrected, then the CEO is authorized to immediately issue a third administrative penalty notice resulting in an automatic penalty of \$400. Division policy allows a CEO to issue a third warning, if warranted, or to issue the third notice without warning. If a third warning is issued, the CEO will include subsequent property or business inspections as administrative action fees added to the penalty.

Division policy directs the CEO to discuss the case with the Division's legal counsel from the District Attorney's Office should the third notice fail to result in code compliance. The CEO and the legal counsel will determine if civil court or criminal court proceedings will be instituted to gain code compliance, or if further administrative penalty notices will be issued (each subsequent notice results in an automatic \$400 penalty).

Criminal Court:

The County's Development Code (WCC Chapter 110) authorizes a CEO to issue a misdemeanor criminal citation for land use, grading, or zoning code violations. The District Attorney's Office must approve the use of the criminal process prior to the CEO issuing the citation. Although not required by Code, Division policy directs the CEO to issue a Notice of Violation/Order to Comply prior to the citation. The notice/order details the code violation and provides actions which must be taken to correct the violation. The notice/order also provides a minimum of 30 calendar days to correct the code violation.

The CEO may also issue misdemeanor criminal citations for building or license code violations, and for certain nuisance code violations. In both circumstances, a citation may be issued without notice; however, Division policy directs that a Notice of Violation/Order to Comply be given prior to issuing the citation. For constructing or erecting a building or structure without the appropriate permit, the notice/order provides 3 working days in order to apply for the proper permit. For businesses operating without a valid license, the notice/order also provides 3 working days in order to apply for the proper license. All other license and nuisance code violations merit a minimum of 30 calendars for compliance with the notice/order.

The CEO may also issue a misdemeanor criminal citation for failure to obey an Administrative Order issued by a hearing officer. In these types of cases, the CEO will issue the citation if warranted immediately after any time frames stipulated by the Order for code compliance.

If the code violation is not corrected with the notice/order, the CEO will issue a misdemeanor criminal citation. The CEO usually files the citation with the appropriate Justice Court within 3 working days after it is issued. The Court normally sets the pre-trial hearing for around 30 days after the citation was filed. The pre-trial hearing allows the defendant the opportunity to plead on the case. Pleas of not guilty result in the Court

setting a trial date before the Judge, and that trial date may be from 60 to 90 days after the hearing.

12. Why does the County allow so much time for a person to correct a Code violation?

There are two principal reasons to allow a person to voluntarily correct land use, license, building, and/or nuisance code violations:

- Many people are not aware that they are in violation of a County Code. Part of the CEO's duties is to educate the public concerning the County's regulations. Often, people quickly and voluntarily correct any violations when the matter is brought to their attention.
- Often it takes time for a person to correct a Code violation, such as removing excess material from a property or applying for a building permit, and providing such time demonstrates good faith on part of both the County and the violator to resolve the matter. It is only after the violator does not demonstrate good faith by taking no steps to correct the violation that the County is forced to take further administrative or legal actions in order to remedy or rectify the violation.

Historically, the County averages about a 95% voluntary compliance rate with County Code violations of land use, license, building, or certain nuisance regulations. This demonstrates that the vast majority of people will correct Code violations when these are brought to their attention and when provided a realistic time frame to remedy or rectify the violations.

13. I received a notice in the mail from your offices, but I am renting the property to tenants. Since they are occupying the residence, aren't they the ones responsible for correcting any violations?

As the property owner, you are responsible for your property and for the actions of your tenants on your property. If your tenant is the person responsible for the code violation, then the CEO will initially contact the tenant concerning code violations. However, if the tenant fails to either respond to the CEO and/or correct the violations, then the CEO will contact you to resolve the matter. As the property owner, you are responsible to ensure that the property is in compliance with County regulations.

Land Use and Nuisance Questions

14. Are there rules for storing vehicles on my residential property?

County code defines storage as placement of a vehicle or vehicles on a property for a period of more than 72 consecutive hours.

Commercial vehicles

Commercial vehicles are not allowed to be stored on any residentially zoned property, except as allowed with a valid home-based business license. Those allowances for a home-based business include:

- One vehicle used for the delivery of materials to or from the property. This vehicle cannot exceed 8,000 pounds gross unladen weight and have no more than 2 axles.

- One vehicle used in conjunction with a licensed mobile business or a licensed limousine service.
- One accessory trailer up to 24 feet in length, provided that the trailer is:
 - parked off the street,
 - regularly used off-site in business, and
 - not used solely for storage or advertising.

Properties in the Warm Springs planning area with single family dwellings are allowed up to 4 commercial vehicles without the requirement for a home-based business license. These vehicles must be:

- registered to and owned by the single family dwelling occupants;
- used for commercial activities conducted away from the property;
- operable and registered with the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles for street travel; and,
- parked within an enclosed garage or behind a screened enclosure (see below for a definition of screened).

Other types of vehicles

Generally, there are no regulations concerning the storage of operable, registered and non-commercial vehicles owned by you on your residentially zoned property. However, the storage of a large number of operable, registered vehicles may constitute a violation of County Code, since such storage is limited to non-residentially zoned property. A CEO will determine whether the storage is of such magnitude to cause a potential violation.

County code defines a junk vehicle as “a street-legal or non-highway vehicle, including component parts, which is ruined, dismantled or inoperable for any reason, or otherwise unused for its original purpose; or, a street-legal vehicle that does not possess a current, valid vehicle registration”. A vehicle is further defined as:

Any self-propelled instrument of conveyance designed primarily for the transportation of persons or goods.

a. “Street-legal Vehicle”. Any instrument of conveyance which can be lawfully licensed or registered for use on public highways, streets, roads, or other public ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, automobiles, trucks, vans, trailers, motor homes or recreational vehicles, campers, motorcycles, and mopeds.

b. “Non-highway Vehicle”. Any instrument of conveyance or off-road vehicle which cannot be lawfully licensed or registered for use on public highways, streets, roads, or other public ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, dune buggies, all terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, boats, and personal water craft.

Junk vehicles are not allowed to be stored in public view on any property in the unincorporated County. There are three exemptions to this regulation:

- Junk vehicles enclosed and visually obscured within a structure, or stored within a lawful screen, are not considered to be in public view. A lawful screen provides physical separation and visual obscuration on all sides (total enclosure) and in all seasons. Screening must be at least 6 feet high can be accomplished by erecting a fence or decorative wall, constructing an earthen berm, planting dense landscaping, or using a structure to screen.
- Junk vehicles used in a properly licensed business of vehicle storage, vehicle dealer, vehicle manufacturer or distributors, vehicle repair shop, rebuilder of vehicles, or automobile wrecking service. The junk vehicles must be stored on the property licensed for business operations.
- Junk vehicles authorized for display by a valid Washoe County Junk Vehicle Display Permit.

There is no limit on the number of junk vehicles enclosed and visually obscured within a structure or stored within a lawful screen. However, the storage of a large number of junk vehicles may constitute a violation of County land use regulations, since such storage is limited to industrially zoned property. A CEO will determine whether the storage is of such magnitude to cause a potential violation.

15. A vehicle has been abandoned on my property without my consent. Can you tow it away?

No. However, if the vehicle is on your property, you can legally have it towed. You should call an automobile towing company to have them remove the vehicle. The automobile towing company will have you complete paperwork concerning ownership of the vehicle and you will be responsible to pay any towing charges.

16. A junk vehicle has been abandoned on a street near my house. Can you remove it?

If the junk vehicle is on a County-owned roadway and has been parked for more than 72 hours, the vehicle is considered abandoned pursuant to NRS 484.397. Contact the Sheriff's Office at **775.328.3001** to report the abandoned vehicle. The Sheriff's Office will post a notice requiring removal on the vehicle and will tow the vehicle if it remains abandoned on the roadway for an additional 72 hours after posting.

If the junk vehicle is parked on a publicly accessible and privately owned roadway, the property owner is responsible for removing the vehicle. You may register a complaint on-line at the [ONE Regional Licensing and Permitting Portal](#) or call the Code Compliance hotline at 328.6106 to file a complaint.

17. I would like to place a cargo container or a rental storage container (such as a Portable On-Demand storage unit) on my property. Are there any rules or regulations on such containers?

Yes. The regulations depend as to whether you intend to permanently place the cargo container on your property, or if the cargo or rental storage container will only be temporarily placed on the property.

Permanent placement of a cargo or storage container:

Rules to place cargo containers on any property vary with the zoning and existing use on the property. Generally, these rules include:

- Must meet placement standards for a detached accessory structure (i.e., rear and side yard setbacks).
- Only 1 cargo container on properties less than 5 acres in size, and limited to a maximum size of ten feet wide by nine feet high by 40 feet long.
- If placed on a suburban or urban residentially zoned property (1 acre or smaller in size), must be one of the following:
 - Behind a lawful screen (see question 14);
 - Behind existing solid vegetation meeting the definition of a lawful screen (see question 14); or,
 - Painted one, solid muted color that blends with the surrounding vegetation, or structures, or topography.
- Cannot be stacked, except on a commercially or industrially zoned property and then cannot be stacked more than 2 containers high.
- Shall not contain plumbing fixtures nor be structurally altered; and shall not display off-premise advertising, company logos, names or other markings.
- Cannot be placed within a residential property's front yard (i.e., cannot be located between a residence and the adjoining street or road providing primary access to the residence).
- Must obtain the required building permit from the Washoe County Building and Safety Division if the cargo container is over the allowable exempted square footage as established in the County's Building Code. As of the date of this *Common Questions* sheet, if the cargo container is more than 200 square feet in size, the property owner or tenant must obtain a building permit.

There are other rules, and each rule must be evaluated based on the use and regulatory zone of your property. Please call the Planning Counter at 775.328.6100 for information if you wish to place these containers on your property.

Temporary placement of a cargo container:

A cargo container may be temporarily placed on a property to support on-going construction activity on the property. Rules governing the temporary placement of a cargo container include:

- The property owner must possess a current, valid building permit and the cargo container must support the development on the property allowed by the building permit.
- The cargo container must be located immediately adjacent to the construction activity.
- The cargo container must be free from damage and severe rust with no exposed metal, and must not be structurally altered.

- The cargo container must be removed within 30 days of the final inspection of the construction or when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued, or when the building permit expires or is revoked.

Temporary placement of a rental storage container:

A storage container rented from a moving or storage company may be temporarily placed on a property to support moving of property or storage of possessions with the following rules:

- The rental storage container is allowed on the property for a maximum of 60 days, after which time the container must be removed; or,
- The rental storage container is allowed on the property for the duration of a current, valid building permit, and the container must be removed upon the final inspection of the construction or when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued, or when the building permit expires or is revoked.
- The rental storage container is only allowed on the sides or rear of a residence, and may not be placed in a street right-of-way.
- Rental storage containers may only be stacked two high on the property.

18. Can I store building material on my residential property?

Building material may be stored outdoors on residentially zoned property only if the material is not in public view. Material enclosed and visually obscured within a structure, or stored within a lawful screen, is not considered to be in public view (see question 14).

Building material may be temporarily stored in public view when the material will be used in conjunction with a valid building permit. The material must be removed from the property or placed away from public view upon final inspection of the construction (e.g., when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued) or when the building permit expires or is revoked.

19. I want to move a new mobile/manufactured home onto my property. Can my current mobile/manufactured home remain on the property after the new home is installed?

No, unless granted permission by a special discretionary review process to retain the second home as a detached accessory dwelling. The ability to have such a second dwelling depends upon the size and zoning of the residential lot. For more information, contact the Planning Counter at 775.328.6100.

Unoccupied mobile/manufactured homes may not be stored on any residentially zoned property. CEOs will inspect a property 30 days after the final inspections for a new mobile/manufactured home to verify that the previous mobile/manufactured home has been removed from the property.

20. I am building my home and would like to reside on my property during construction. Is this allowed?

Yes. You are allowed to live in a mobile home, manufactured home, travel trailer, commercial coach, or recreational vehicle on your residentially zoned property provided

you have a valid building permit to construct your primary residence. However, you are limited to a time period of 18 months from the date of the original building permit for your primary residence or no more than 29 days from the date you receive your certificate of occupancy (whichever is sooner), at which time you must vacate your temporary quarters.

You may be granted a single extension of 18 months, provided you still have a valid building permit for your primary residence. In no case will you be allowed to live in the temporary quarters after 37 months from the date of the original building permit for your primary residence.

If you choose to temporarily live in a mobile home, manufactured home, or commercial coach, you must obtain a valid set-up permit before occupying the temporary quarters. You will be required to post a \$2,000 bond to cover costs of removing the temporary quarters at the time you apply for your set-up permit.

After the time period to live in the temporary quarters expires, you must ensure that the mobile home, manufactured home, or commercial coach is no longer used as temporary living quarters (e.g., disconnect any water and/or sanitary sewer service lines). If you remove your temporary living quarters, then your \$2,000 bond will be returned to you. A mobile home or manufactured home may be allowed to remain on your property as a second dwelling provided you have completed the required special discretionary review process to retain the second home as a detached accessory dwelling prior to expiration of its temporary use.

21. I would like my guests to stay on my property in an RV. Is this allowed?

Yes; however, your guests may only stay in a self-contained travel trailer or recreational vehicle on your property subject to the following provisions:

- You must own and live on the property, and the property must be residentially zoned.
- The temporary visit does not extend beyond 14 consecutive days;
- The guests or relatives cannot pay you to stay on your property;
- You must provide written permission to your guests (subject to inspection by County officials) clearly stating that the visit is authorized by you without any form of compensation;
- No discharge of any litter, sewage, effluent, or other material will be allowed on your property (any discharge must be into sanitary facilities designed to dispose of such material); and,
- No water or sanitary sewer connections are allowed from the travel trailer or RV to any buildings on your property.

Finally, you are limited to four visits (regardless of duration) each calendar year by any guests on your property.

22. Are there rules for placing accessory structures such as sheds or playhouses on my property? How about rules for setbacks from my property line for these types of structures?

Regulations for accessory structures and their required setbacks from your property lines vary depending on the regulatory zoning of your property. If you have specific questions about these uses, please call the Planning Counter at 328.6100 for more information.

23. My neighbor is conducting activities that are prohibited by our neighborhood CCRs. Can you help me?

No. Codes, Covenants, and Restrictions (CCRs) are a private contract between you and another party (typically the builder who developed your subdivision or perhaps a homeowners association). As such, any disputes regarding the CCRs must be settled between you, your neighbor, and the other party to the contract (e.g., the homeowners association). Washoe County cannot interfere in these types of civil matters.

Business License Questions

24. When do I need a Washoe County business license?

You will need a Washoe County business license to conduct business within unincorporated Washoe County. You will need a business license if:

- Your place of business (either from a commercial location or from your home) is located within unincorporated Washoe County, **OR**
- You physically come into unincorporated Washoe County to conduct your business.

You will need a Washoe County business license to conduct business within Washoe County even if you have a business license from the State of Nevada, another city, or another county. Please contact the Washoe County Business License staff at 775.328.3733 for more information.

25. What is considered as “conducting a business”?

You are “conducting a business” if you engage in any business, trade, calling, industry, occupation, or profession in Washoe County outside of the incorporated areas of the Cities of Reno or Sparks. You must obtain a business license if you (or your agent, employee, or partner):

- Engage in the business, trade, calling, industry, occupation, or profession;
- Solicit patronage for the business, either actively or passively;
- Perform, or attempt to perform, any part of a business, trade, calling, industry, occupation, or profession;
- Rent, lease, or sub-lease:
 - any commercial or industrial property or
 - three or more residential units on a single parcel of land;
- Conduct a garage and/or yard sale longer than 72 hours in duration or occurring on the same property more than twice in any 6 month period; or,
- Breed 5 or more litters of cats or dogs in a calendar year.

26. Are there businesses that don't require a business license?

The following businesses do not require a Washoe County business license:

- Providing childcare in private homes to six or fewer children.
- Garage and/or yard sales which are less than 72 hours in duration and/or do not occur more than twice on the same property in any 6 month period.
- Telecommuting from home by employees of a business located elsewhere.
- Informal, casual, or seasonal work performed by minors (for example, babysitting, lawn mowing).
- Parades or processions (although these activities do require notification to the Washoe County Sheriff's Office).

27. Can I operate a business from my home?

Yes. You will need to obtain a home-based business license. Home-based businesses are allowed in any residentially zoned area, provided that the business activities do not alter the character or appearance of the residential neighborhood. The Washoe County Business License Ordinance (Washoe County Code Chapter 25) contains specific restrictions on the type of businesses and activities that qualify as a home-based business. The regulations also contain a list of standards which must be followed by all home-based businesses. You should contact the Washoe County Business License office at 775.328.3733 if you are interested in operating a business from your home. Also, review your neighborhood's CC&R's as some home owner associations prohibit home businesses.

More Questions?

28. I did not see my question, now what?

Please contact the Code Compliance hotline, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time at 775.328.6106. We will be happy to help you.

Code Compliance Officers

Lora Barretta	775.328.3630	(Cold Springs, Geiger Grade, North Valleys, South Reno, Spanish Springs, Warm Springs, Washoe Valley)
Bert Bracy	775.328.3621	(Gerlach, Incline Village, Mogul, Mount Rose area, Sun Valley, Verdi, Wadsworth)
Brian Farmer	775.328.2312	(All building and engineering complaints)