

NORTH AUSTIN COALITION OF NEIGHBORHOODS



Representing over 70,000 Neighbors • Building a Better Austin • One Neighborhood at a Time

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Code Enforcement Resource Guide

2007

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Code Enforcement Resource Guide

Voluntary compliance is our primary goal!

SHOULD I FILE A COMPLAINT?

If you suspect a code violation in your neighborhood, please report it to Code Enforcement. If you have questions about whether an item is a code violation, you can use one of the links on the next page. Or you can go to

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/code.htm> or google "Austin code enforcement."

HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT?

You will need the address of the place that has the code violation.

1. Call 311, and then push prompt 2. You will be directed to City of Austin information.
 - Give the dispatcher the address and tell them you are reporting a code violation.
 - Ask the dispatcher to repeat back anything that might be unclear or confusing.
 - Write the complaint number and the address on the "Report Worksheet" (attached). You can copy this form as needed or you can obtain extra copies of this guide at http://www.gracywoods.org/neighborhood_watch.
2. Seven business days later, call Code Enforcement at 974-1986.
 - Give the Code Enforcement representative the address you reported (the complaint number is for your personal records only).
 - Ask for the case number, the investigator's name, and the investigator's contact information.
 - Call the investigator and ask for the status of the investigation.
 - Give any additional information that may help Code Enforcement's case (such as day and time when the violation typically occurs, etc.).
 - Request the time frame for resolving this issue. Remember that Code Enforcement completion may take up to 45 days.
 - **If a problem recurs after having been corrected, please report it to 311 again.**

WHAT ARE COMMON CODE VIOLATIONS?

If you're viewing this document electronically, press the CTRL key plus click the link to get a detailed description. Or you can go to

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/code.htm> or google "Austin code enforcement."

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HOW DOES THE CITY DEAL WITH MY COMPLAINT?

Once a complaint is filed, code investigators visit the site and confirm that a code violation is present. Investigators then send a "Notice of Violation" to the property owners or issue a citation. The owners have a set amount of time to correct the violation. The time will vary depending on the nature of the violation. If property owners do not comply, Code Enforcement may take any of the following actions, depending on the situation:

- Hire contractors to clean up the property; secure or demolish dangerous buildings. Property owners will be billed for the labor plus an administrative fee.
- File criminal charges in municipal court.
- Place liens on property for unpaid bills.
- File a civil suit.
- Present housing cases to the Building and Standards Commission. The commission may issue repair orders with fines attached or a demolition order for non-compliance.

Report Worksheet

This document is for your records; it is designed to help guide you through the process. It is also a good way to keep track of the necessary information. Be sure to make a separate worksheet for each violation you are reporting. You may wish to provide a duplicate of the completed worksheets to your neighborhood association president.

Address you are reporting: _____

Property owner's name (if available) & contact information: _____

Tenant's name (if available) & contact information: _____

Description of suspected code violation (see section on "Common Code Violations"): _____

Any actions taken before calling 311: _____

Date you reported it to 311: _____ Complaint number: _____

Date you called to follow up: _____ Case number: _____

Investigator's name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Additional dates investigator was contacted: _____

Status of the investigation: _____

Additional information that was given to investigator: _____

Estimated date of resolution: _____

Notes: _____

General Information

Other information on the City of Austin Code Enforcement

For an overview of the City of Austin, Solid Waste Services, Code Enforcement, visit <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/code.htm> or google "Austin code enforcement."

- The City of Austin Code Enforcement Division telephone number is 974-1986.
- Reports that were made prior to 2006 that have not elicited a response from CE should be reported again since the processes have changed. Also, you can ask the 311 dispatcher to tell you to which department the complaint will be routed. Then, as stated above, follow up directly with the appropriate Code Enforcement department or investigator if no action has been taken.

Get help from your neighbors

- It is important to continually solicit input and help with reporting violations from neighborhood association members during neighborhood meetings, through neighborhood newsletters and websites, and through email, etc.
- Remember that your identification CAN be confidential if requested.

Severe cases and repeat offenders

- If violations continue from the same location over and over again, Criminal Enforcement may step in with citations, charges filed, and fines imposed up to \$2,000.
- In some cases, citations can be given on the spot (i.e., repeat offenders, dangerous conditions, ignoring the notice of violation, etc.). This has proven to be very effective.
- If an individual or company has two violations in one year, they are considered a "Repeat Offender." The maximum fine can be requested for repeat offenders.
- Abandoned structures that are open and accessible pose a hazard to children, etc. Fires and other crimes can occur in these structures. They need to be reported immediately.

Permits

- To find out if a structure being built or remodeled has a permit, you can look online at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/codelist.htm#permit> by the address or permit number. Expired permits are treated the same as no permit. It is easy to navigate Code Enforcement's webpage, and the entire permit listing is displayed. You can also find out if an inspection has passed or failed. If you are still unsure, you should call 311 for suspected violations.
- If a structure does not have a permit, it should be reported to 311.

Some common violations

- Public Nuisance violations are things such as high weeds, animals, stagnant water, abandoned structures, solid waste, abandoned mattresses, trash, and debris.
- A neighborhood must "opt in" in order to enforce "No Parking on Lawns."
- Only one car is allowed per licensed driver per house, up to a total of four vehicles. You can call in a code violation if there are a large number of vehicles continually at a residence.
- Over-occupancy of a residence is a code violation.
- Perpetual garage sales, automotive repair shops and other home businesses that increase litter, trash, and traffic are code violations. If you are unsure, call 311 and report it.
- Parking over a sidewalk is illegal and is best handled by a police District Representative.

Remember: It is okay to call 311 even if you are unsure it is a code violation.