



# PLUMAS COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT

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## OVERVIEW OF FUNCTION, PROCEDURES

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## INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE REQUEST FORM (COMPLAINT FORM)

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Code Enforcement Department is to achieve code compliance so that the citizens of Plumas County may enjoy a cleaner, safer and better place to live.

The majority of citizens recognize the importance of voluntary compliance with County Code. To protect our citizens from those who disobey these codes, and to ensure the general health, safety and welfare and of our community, codes must be enforced. Most code violations do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Sheriffs Department; therefore, a Code Enforcement Department was established by the Board of Supervisors to delegate this responsibility to Code Enforcement.

### SCOPE

The Code Enforcement Department investigates violations of:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Building Codes
- Environmental Health & Safety Regulations

Alleged violations come to the attention of Code Enforcement through the public, community groups, other agencies and Board of Supervisors referrals. Code Enforcement is primarily a complaint-driven process with the sole purpose of maintaining established norms and standards for our community.

### Complaint Priority System – Criteria

Highest priority cases are investigated immediately, and a site visit usually takes place within 72 hours of report of allegation. The remaining cases are investigated as promptly as staffing allows.

### **Priority 1:**

Health and safety complaints involving hazardous conditions, matters of urgent public safety, and other complaints deemed by Code Enforcement as requiring immediate response.

**Examples:** Surfacing sewage, contaminated wells, building without permits, substandard or non-habitable structures used as living units, fire hazards, chemical storage, grading, work in creeks.

### **Priority 2:**

Complaints received on open Code Enforcement cases. Recurrent verified violations, violations on the same property and involving the same type of violation or same operator. Abandoned vehicles in public right-of-way.

### **Priority 3:**

This level is for most violations. Complaints are investigated on a first come, first-served basis, after determination by the Code Enforcement Officer or designee that the activity violates County requirements.

**Examples:** Garage conversions, setbacks, trailers, illegal living units, accessory structures, conversions to guest houses, parking, solid waste, home-based businesses.

### **Priority 4:**

Complaints related to abandoned vehicles on private property and similar types of complaints.

### **Priority 5:**

Complaints that are suspended from investigation until proper evidence substantiating the violation is submitted. When adequate evidence is available, the complaint is re-prioritized, or cases that have been suspended by Administration or Board Directive.

**Examples:** Living in mobile homes or travel trailers where no health and safety issues exist. Home occupations or Child Care Facilities – No hazards exist.

### **Operating Principles:**

1. Compliance is our goal; enforcement is to be used after other options have failed.
2. Respond to enforcement concerns in accordance with established priorities.
3. Assist the owner or tenant through the permit process, where this approach achieves compliance.
4. Allow the owner/tenant a reasonable amount of time to resolve a violation.
5. Creating a homeless situation is to be avoided whenever possible.

## **COMPLAINTS**

An Investigative Service Request Form – Complaint Form (attached) is mandatory before a complaint is accepted for investigation. The complaint form can be submitted by mail, email, walk-in, or fax. Phone complaints are only accepted when the complaint is determined by the Code Enforcement Director to be a hazardous health and safety issue requiring immediate action. Any letters, photos or other submitted documentation are attached to the complaint form. Complaints should be filed when someone feels there is a violation of County Codes occurring in their neighborhood or community.

The following information is mandatory before a complaint is accepted for investigation:

- A signed & dated complaint form.
- The site address and/or assessor parcel number (APN) of the alleged violation.
- Reporting party's name, physical address, mailing address, email address, telephone number and signature.
- A description of the violation.
- The following questions will be verified through staff's initial contact with the property owner of the alleged violation(s):
  - WHO is the violator (property owner and/or tenant's name)?
  - WHAT is the violation?
  - WHEN did the violation occur?
  - WHERE is the violation located on the property?
  - WHY is it a violation?

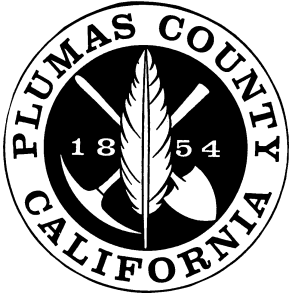
All completed Investigative Service Request Forms are forwarded to the Code Enforcement Officer or designee. Complaints from residents about violations in their neighborhood are the most important source of information obtained in seeking Code Enforcement.

We understand that people may be hesitant to complain if their identity as the complaining party is freely disclosed. It is in the public interest to preserve the confidentiality of persons who have complained about code violations. Complainants should feel free from fear of reprisals. The Investigative Service Request Form includes a space for a complainant to check to specifically request that the identity of the complainant be kept confidential.

Records of complaints and the complainant's name are considered 'acquired in confidence', consistent with Section 1040 of the Evidence Code and Section 6254 of the Government Code. The County routinely declines to disclose the identity of an informant (absent a court order).

### **Complaint Screening and Assignment**

The Code Enforcement Officer or designee is responsible for preliminary screening and assignment of all Investigative Service Request Forms under the responsibility of the Code Enforcement Division. Priority 1 complaints are immediately assigned to a Code Enforcement Officer for investigation.



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## Investigative Service Request Form (Complaint Form)

Important Note: Complete and accurate information, including complainant's signature, is required. Incomplete or insufficient information may delay or stop this investigation.

Name of Violator: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address of Violation: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessor's Parcel Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint Types. Check categories that apply **AND** include written remarks at the bottom

- Grading or diversion of water flows without permit
- Building a structure without a permit (*does not apply to a structure exempted from building permit requirements*)
- Unsafe dwelling, dangerous building
- Lack of final inspection, using an unfinished or non-approved building
- Other dangerous or unpermitted construction without permits (specify)
  
- Two or more dwelling units in single-family zoning
- Home occupation – commercial uses in a residential zoning district
- Non-compliance with commercial site plan
- Living in a travel trailer
- Site development, setback violations (*easement issues are considered civil matters-not enforced by Code Enforcement*)
- Other zoning or planning violation (explain below)  
(*NOTE: CC&R requirements are civil matters-not enforced by Code Enforcement*)
- Septic system, none present or surfacing (circle one)
- Water well violations, lack of water, or maintenance required that endangers water potability
- Solid waste accumulation, trash, and items that attract rodents or insects on private property
- Health related – restaurants, food outlets, public pools, and consumer protection issues
- Hazardous materials – material spills, toxic storage, underground tanks
  
- Abandoned, wrecked, dismantled autos and parts on private property
- Junkyard, auto dismantling, or accumulation of other material for storage and/or sale
- Other

