

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES



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Inspector Safety

BPP 122

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## Summary

1. Provides general guidelines for safety practices and the proper use of safety equipment during the inspection process.
2. Outlines the procedure for investigating hazardous situations involving potential criminal activity.

## Background

Employee safety is one of our highest priorities. This policy addresses general worker safety and equipment related to inspecting construction sites or hazardous situations. More detailed construction site safety information, including online video training, can be obtained on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website. <https://osha.oregon.gov/Pages/topics/construction.aspx>

The Building Division is responsible for the enforcement of the dangerous building provisions of the International Property Maintenance Code as adopted by Wilsonville Code Chapter 9. The investigation of hazardous situations may involve dangerous structural, mechanical and/or plumbing components. Additionally, dangerous buildings tend to attract vagrants and individuals involved in criminal activity. The Police Department may request that the Building Division assist in the investigation or vice versa. It is prudent to provide direction for staff when responding to these types of complaints and requests for inspection.

## Discussion

This policy was developed to provide general guidance for the inspection staff with respect to the proper use of equipment and general safety practices on the job. OSHA rules apply and must be followed at all times. Items 1-10 identify key construction site safety topics. Items 11-14 provide guidelines for investigating hazardous situations involving potential criminal activity, hostile individuals, or dangerous animals which require police or fire escort.

## Construction Site Safety

- 1. Hard Hats:**

**Q:** When do I need to be concerned with wearing a hard hat on a construction project?

**A:** Hard hats are required to be worn on a job site when there are overhead projections or when there is any work occurring overhead.

## **2. Trenches:**

**Q:** What limits are there for inspecting in trenches?

**A:** Inspectors should exercise great caution when entering trenches of any depth. Trenches 4 to 5 feet in depth must be entered and exited with a ladder. Trenches over 5 feet in depth shall not be entered into unless absolutely necessary and shall only be done if the trench has OSHA approved shoring or protective systems in place.

## **3. Ladders:**

**Q:** What types of things should I keep in mind when climbing ladders?

**A:** Ladders must be OSHA approved. Commercial jobs should be provided with Class A ladders for access. When accessing a roof or additional floor level, the ladder must extend above the roof or floor level by a minimum of three (3) feet. Ladders must be secured or tied off when accessing an additional floor level or roof. Inspectors must keep three points of contact at all times and should not carry tools or clipboards in hands when climbing a ladder.

## **4. Roofs:**

**Q:** What types of safety items should I be aware of when on a roof? When do I need fall protection? Is there special training I need for fall protection?

**A:** Fall protection is required for anyone accessing projects where access is required above six (6) feet for commercial work and ten (10) feet for residential work. Fall protection is not required for inspectors at any level if the inspector is only accessing the roof to perform the inspection, then immediately exits the roof and descends to a safe level. Fall protection is also not required if approved guardrail barriers are in place along the edge of the roof. Specialized fall protection training is required for the proper installation and use of fall protection systems. Staff is discouraged from performing inspections where fall protection is required unless absolutely necessary.

## **5. Scaffolding:**

**Q:** Can I access scaffolding by the scaffolding ladder or do I need additional access? Should scaffolding have safety railings? Are there any special requirements for planking or bracing on scaffolds?

**A:** Staff must exercise great care when accessing scaffolding. Keep in mind that the weight of materials, tools, workers, and inspectors on a section of scaffolding can easily overload a section and cause failure of the scaffolding. Scaffolding planks should appear solid and without a lot of cracks or signs of abuse. Railings should be provided behind the scaffold if the walking surface or planking exceeds ten (10) feet above grade. Approved ladders should be used for access onto the scaffolding.

## 6. Ear Protection:

**Q:** When do I need hearing protection?

**A:** If noise levels reach 85 decibels or more then hearing protection is required. As a rule of thumb to judge what 85 decibels is:

- If a contractor has to yell when standing 1 foot away in order to communicate.
- Anytime power operated saws, drills or air compressors are operated in the immediate vicinity.

## 7. Eye Protection:

**Q:** When do I need to wear safety goggles or eye protection on a job?

**A:** Eye protection should be worn whenever an inspector is on a job where there is potential for flying debris or objects. Examples include when in the immediate vicinity of nails being driven by hammers or around compressor equipment. Approved eye protection should also be worn by electrical inspectors when accessing panels rated at over 240 volts. Approved eye protection is mandatory when in the presence of hazardous materials or chemicals.

## 8. Boots/Shoes:

**Q:** What types of boots or shoes should I be wearing? Are tennis shoes ok? Do I need steel toe boots?

**A:** Any good boots with a quality sole will work. It is preferred that boots be worn rather than shoes simply because boots tend to withstand the abuses of construction projects, provide better foot protection and ankle support and present a more respectable and professional appearance. Steel toed boots are not required.

## 9. Visibility:

**Q:** Do I really need to wear one of those orange safety vests? If so, when? What type of vest is acceptable?

**A:** Whenever an inspector is on a project where heavy equipment is in operation, a visibility vest must be worn. The vest can be hi-vis orange or green. Reflective stripes on the vest are not required unless worn at night.

## 10. Utility Vaults:

**Q:** When can I go into a utility vault?

**A:** Utility vaults, such as fire service line vaults, may be accessed anytime the vault is new and under construction, provided with good air circulation and open to the atmosphere without a lid. When under construction, inspectors are strongly advised to only enter when another person is present, and only when there is a needed inspection purpose for doing so. Inspectors are not permitted to access vaults after the lid has been installed and the vault has been placed in service as the vault may only be accessed by someone trained in OSHA confined space rules.

## Investigation of Hazardous Situations

11. A case will be created in the permit tracking system. The case will be routed through the Building Official for assignment to the appropriate inspection staff.
12. If the investigation is requested by the Fire Department or Police Department, the Building Official will contact the appropriate person from that department to ensure a complete understanding of the status of the site and the circumstances involved. Investigations of sites that involve the potential for criminal activity will be secured by the Police Department before a Building Inspector is dispatched. Potentially dangerous individuals will be removed prior to the inspection. Other hazards, such as dangerous animals, will also be removed.
13. The inspector assigned to investigate a potentially hazardous situation is responsible for determining the degree of hazard involved in the inspection when they arrive on a site. The inspector should not conduct the inspection until they are satisfied that the premises are secure and the investigation will not place them in an unsafe situation. Investigations which present the potential for dangerous confrontation from the occupants will be postponed until a uniformed Police Officer is present to accompany the assigned inspector. The Building Official is responsible for arranging the police escort.
14. If the inspection reveals the building should be defined as dangerous, the Building Official will determine the appropriate course of action for notification and posting of the building in accordance with the City Municipal Code.

### Policy

There are many potentially hazardous situations on construction projects that are unique and require an inspector to use common sense. The above guidelines should be adhered to as closely as possible when conducting inspections on construction sites.

If for any reason, the inspector feels that a situation is unsafe or equipment provided for access is unsecured, inadequate or in disrepair, the inspector has the authority to request correction of the situation prior to conducting an inspection. Unsafe circumstances must also be reported to the Building Official.

The Building Division will discuss jobsite safety with staff in periodic staff meetings and maintain access to a current copy of the OSHA rules and online training for access by staff.