

Code Enforcement Officer's Registration Program

A major component of the Statewide Building Code Act, signed into law on June 17, 1997 is the requirement for registration, continuing education and disciplinary action at the state level for all individuals employed by local jurisdictions as Code Enforcement Officers. The law required all code enforcement officers, referred to as CEOs, to be certified in their respective disciplines and registered by the South Carolina Building Codes Council.

The term "Code Enforcement Officer" includes any person employed by a governmental entity that performs as a building official or building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, gas, housing, swimming pool or combination inspector or building plan examiner.

The CEO Registration Program, which went into effect July 1, 1999, consists of four major segments: registration, continuing education, funding for education and disciplinary action.

The registration segment uses the same basic application, review and issuance process that other state licensing programs utilize. The Council issues three types of registrations in nine categories within four classifications. Before registration can occur, however, the applicant must be employed by a governmental entity and certified in the discipline for which registration is requested. Staff was delegated the responsibility to review and approve various nationally accepted code enforcement officer testing and certification programs and to issue all licenses.

The first and most significant type of registration is the full registration, which indicates the individual has actual experience & has taken one or more written examinations to demonstrate proficiency in his/her discipline or specialty & is certified by a nationally recognized certifying entity.

The third type of registration is the provisional registration, which is issued to an individual upon initial employment, who is not certified & has no experience as a CEO. The provisional registration is valid for a specified time period, depending on the position for which the person is hired & upon expiration, is not renewable. If the individual holding a provisional registration does not obtain certification in his/her respective discipline within the time period specified on the registration

certificate, that person cannot practice as a CEO, at any level, in any jurisdiction in the state.

All registrations are required to be renewed before July first of each odd numbered year and are valid for two years. Before a registration can be renewed, the CEO must present proof that he/she has completed a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education in the two years prior to expiration.

The registration of a CEO failing to renew by the close of business on June 30 of an odd numbered year will be placed in a dormant status. A 31 day grace period will then be provided to submit the appropriate documentation for registration without penalty or examination. The registration will remain in the dormant status and the CEO will be allowed to continue practicing until the renewal process is complete. If the CEO fails to renew his/her registration by the close of business on July 31, the registration is rendered invalid & he/she must cease practice. In addition, the CEO, at the discretion of the Building Codes Council may be subject to examination before a new registration may be issued.

The continuing education segment also uses the same basic process as other state licensing programs. Each registrant is required to accrue a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education per registration cycle. Staff was delegated the responsibility to approve all sources, providers and courses for continuing education. The approval process includes a complete review of the course curriculum and all related educational materials, a verification of the presentation time and a review of the instructor's qualifications to present the material.

The most unique segment of the registration program is the funding for education. The Statewide Building Code Act included a requirement (and the funding) for the Building Codes Council to pay for the courses and examinations necessary for code enforcement officers to become certified and for all subsequent continuing education (up to 24 hours) required by the statute. Staff was charged with the responsibility to establish and maintain on a continuing basis, the process for approving and paying for individual courses for each code enforcement officer in the state. Payments are made to approved course providers on a direct (billed from the provider) or reimbursed (billed from the individual) basis. A report of the education expenditures is required to be submitted to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on an annual basis.

Due to the requirement for payment of certification and continuing education, and to assure that the money is producing maximum benefit, the Council established a policy of monitoring the course presentations. Staff performs course monitoring as often as possible, on a "spot-check" basis.

The disciplinary action segment also uses the same basic process as other state licensing programs. A wider variety and more diverse groups of complainants,

however, may lodge complaints against code enforcement officers than most of the other licensing programs. Staff was delegated the responsibility to review, investigate and initiate disciplinary action against code enforcement officers.

Impersonation of a CEO is a misdemeanor & carries a penalty of up to \$200 fine or 30 days in jail, for each day the impersonation exists.