


County of Los Alamos

Building Safety Division

Policy: Certificate of Occupancy

Effective Date: July 26, 2019

Approved By: Michael Arellano (July 26, 2019)

Revised: 
Elias Isaacson, CDD Director


Date

Policy: A Certificate of Occupancy must be issued by the building official prior to occupying a new residential or commercial building. All Certificates of Occupancy must then be signed, scanned, and saved into the permit tracking system.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all new residential and commercial buildings are verified as compliant with applicable codes and regulations prior to occupancy. The issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) confirms that a structure has been inspected, approved, and deemed safe for use. This policy establishes consistent procedures for the issuance, documentation, and recordkeeping of Certificates of Occupancy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all new construction projects within the jurisdiction of the Building Safety Division, including:

- Residential and commercial buildings requiring a Certificate of Occupancy under applicable building codes.
- Temporary Certificates of Occupancy, where permitted by the Building Official.
- Recordkeeping and digital archiving of all Certificates of Occupancy issued.

This policy covers the process from final inspection approval through document issuance and storage in the permit tracking system.

3. Eligibility

This policy applies to:

- **Building Officials** authorized to issue Certificates of Occupancy.
- **Inspectors** responsible for conducting final building inspections.

- **Permit Technicians and administrative staff** responsible for documentation and recordkeeping.
- **Contractors, developers, and property owners** seeking occupancy authorization for new structures.

Only a Building Official or their designee is authorized to issue and sign a Certificate of Occupancy.

4. Procedures

- **Final Inspection and Approval**
 - All required inspections (building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and others as applicable) must be completed and approved prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
 - The Building Official or designee must verify that all permit conditions have been satisfied.
- **Issuance of Certificate of Occupancy**
 - Once final approval is confirmed, the Building Official will issue a Certificate of Occupancy for the permitted project.
 - Occupancy of any new residential or commercial building is prohibited until the Certificate of Occupancy has been officially issued.
- **Documentation and Recordkeeping**
 - Each Certificate of Occupancy must be:
 - a. Signed by the Building Official (or authorized designee).
 - b. Scanned to create a digital copy.
 - c. Saved and properly indexed in the permit tracking system associated with the project record.
- **Distribution**
 - The original Certificate of Occupancy shall be provided to the permit holder or property owner.

5. Requirements

To ensure compliance with this policy:

- All final inspections must be passed prior to CO issuance.
- No occupancy may occur before the CO is issued.
- The CO must be signed by the Building Official or designee.
- The signed CO must be scanned and uploaded into the permit tracking system on the same business day it is issued.

- Permit Technicians must confirm that all required documents are attached before closing the permit record.

6. Enforcement

Occupying a building prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy is a violation of building code and this policy and may result in:

- A stop work or cease occupancy order,
- Fines or penalties as provided by applicable codes, and/or
- Revocation of the permit or legal enforcement action by the Building Safety Division.

Staff who fail to follow documentation or recordkeeping requirements may be subject to corrective or disciplinary action, consistent with County personnel policies.

The Building Official is responsible for ensuring compliance and maintaining all records of Certificates of Occupancy in accordance with County record retention standards.