



Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals

Voluntary Guidelines for Virtual Inspections

1.0 Introduction

The Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals has developed guidelines to aid jurisdictions in the process of conducting Virtual Inspections based on the following change to FBC Ch. 1, Broward County Administrative Amendments:

110.3.13 Virtual inspections. *Virtual inspections may be performed in accordance with the appropriate sections of FS 553 and other relevant statutes.*

Additionally, these Recommended Practices are based on the *2021 IBC Resource A - Recommended Practices for Remote Virtual Inspections*.

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The purpose and scope of these Recommended Practices are to guide the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) when implementing a Virtual Inspection program as well as the construction industry user.

2.0 Definitions and Acronyms

Virtual Inspection: Means a form of visual inspection which uses visual or electronic aids to allow a building code administrator or an inspector, or a team of inspectors, to perform an inspection from a distance or without having to be physically present at the job site during the inspection.

FBC - Current edition of the Florida Building Code.

3.0 Virtual Inspection Process

Where Wi-Fi and/or cellular reception are poor or unavailable, some AHJs may consider allowing the contractor to provide an acceptable electronic documentation of the area that needs an inspection for review by the assigned inspector or team of inspectors.

The applicable Codes and Standards for virtual inspection are the same as the adopted codes, laws, ordinances, and referenced standards of the AHJ. The implementation of the virtual inspection is intended to achieve the same results as the typical in-person site inspection by applying the provisions of adopted codes, such as the FBC and other applicable and adopted Codes or standards.

3.1 Permit Holder: Requesting a Virtual Inspection

- 3.1.1. Electronically sign a notice indicating that the building owner or permit holder of record or representative:
 - 3.1.1.1. Consent to the use of the virtual inspections.
 - 3.1.1.2. Is responsible for their safety during the virtual inspection.
 - 3.1.1.3. Allows the complete use of the videos and photos of the virtual inspection by the AHJ.
 - 3.1.1.4. Certifies they are making available the site and inspection items truthfully and to the best of their ability.
 - 3.1.1.5. Is responsible for compliance with all codes and standards applicable to the project.
 - 3.1.1.6. Acknowledges that participation in the virtual inspection program is voluntary.
 - 3.1.1.7. Acknowledges that the decision to perform a virtual or in-person inspection is at the Sole discretion of the AHJ.
- 3.1.2. Before contacting the department to schedule the inspection(s), confirm that the minimum criteria for inspections are met. See Appendix A for examples of qualified inspection activities.
- 3.1.3. Call or go online to schedule an appointment for inspection with the AHJ.
- 3.1.4. An adult (18 years or older) must be at the jobsite to perform the virtual inspection.
- 3.1.5. When scheduling the inspection, provide the contact phone number, permit number, type, and number of requested inspections.

3.2 AHJ: Scheduling Virtual Inspection

- 3.2.1. The permit holder shall request all scheduled inspections at least one business day before the desired inspection date.
- 3.2.2. Each permit holder will be given an approximate time window for inspection.
- 3.2.3. Schedule after-hours or emergency inspections as per AHJ policy.
- 3.2.4. Determine the types of inspections allowed. See Appendix A for examples of qualified inspection activities.

3.3 Permit Holder: Prepare for Virtual Inspection

- 3.3.1. Before the inspection, ensure that:
 - 3.3.1.1. The necessary tools based on the type of inspection are readily available.
- 3.3.2. Have approved plans, permit card, and other necessary construction documents available.
- 3.3.3. All features applicable to the required inspection must be visible during the inspection. These features must be captured sufficiently and clearly for the inspector to evaluate.
- 3.3.4. If at any point the inspector believes that the inspection process is not allowing them to properly assess compliance with the codes, etc., they may require that an in-person inspection be conducted at a future time or instruct the customer to make different arrangements.

3.4 Permit Holder: Prepare to Receive the Virtual Inspection Call

- 3.4.1. Ensure that the lens and screen of any device used to capture images or video have been cleaned. Dust, grit, smudges, etc., might interfere with the image quality and distort the inspector's view.
- 3.4.2. Be prepared to answer the inspector's call at any time during the scheduled timeframe. Be cooperative and closely follow the inspector's instructions.
- 3.4.3. As each site and inspection are different, allot the proper amount of time for the type of inspection and the site's accessibility.

3.5 What to Expect During the Inspection

- 3.5.1. Begin inspection at the street view, looking at the structure with the address or other Required jobsite identification in the video display.
 - 3.5.1.1. The inspector may also verify the location through GPS/Geotagging, where the Service is available.
- 3.5.2. Follow the inspector's directions with respect to the order and direction of inspection.

3.6 Inspection Results

- 3.6.1. The inspection results will be entered into the AHJ's permit database as soon as practicable after the virtual inspection is completed. It is important to note that the inspection was completed using the virtual inspection process.

3.7 Maintaining Records of Inspections

- 3.7.1 Required inspection records, including, but not limited to, correction notices, shall be maintained per the AHJ's policy, laws, regulations, and applicable codes, and may be subject to disclosure.

4.0 Training and Communication

Training and effective communication of processes, procedures and requirements are essential and a critical part to the success of any program.

4.1 Staff Training

- 4.1.1. Ensure all staff are trained in the appropriate areas of responsibility.

4.2 Additional Considerations

- 4.2.1. Adopt basic online security practices. Consult with your IT department for guidance.
- 4.2.2. Consult with your legal counsel to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local requirements related to your virtual inspection program. For example, you may want to consult counsel to determine whether a homeowner's release is needed to conduct a virtual inspection.
- 4.2.3. Ensure that all staff have access to the codes and standards applicable to the work they are inspecting.
- 4.2.4. Document lessons learned to improve your virtual inspection program and to support potential long-term establishment of virtual inspection processes.

Appendix A (Examples of Potential Activities)

The following are a few examples of construction activities that may be included in a virtual inspection program. This list is not all-inclusive. Determining whether an inspection can be conducted is at the sole discretion of the AHJ.

1. Plumbing system repairs or fixture replacements.
2. Construction trailer installations.
3. Residential or light commercial HVAC direct replacement or repair.
4. Minor residential electrical.
5. Miscellaneous exterior repair or upgrades (stucco, windows, etc.).
6. Re-roofing/roof covering replacement.
7. Water heater or water softener direct replacement.
8. New residential plumbing rough-in.
9. Residential rooftop-mounted photovoltaic panel systems.
10. Manufactured home installation verification.
11. Any other inspection approved by the AHJ.

End of Guidelines