

## WSSC Regulatory Services Group

# Master Plumber & Master Gasfitter Newsletter

## Special Announcement—Strict Enforcement of Outside Chimney Venting Restrictions:

In the November 2013 Newsletter, WSSC staff provided an important safety notice regarding strict enforcement of Outside Chimney Venting Restrictions. These restrictions affect most applications where space heating appliance(s) [furnaces and boilers] are served by an “outside” masonry chimney, whereby the chimney will require the installation of a listed liner when any of the existing appliances served by the chimney are replaced.

WSSC has produced an Informational Guideline that details both the rationale and application of these restrictions. This document is intended to be used by licensed

plumbing and gasfitting firms to inform and train their licensed installers. This document should also be provided to homeowners (by estimators, installers, etc.), to inform them of the justification behind these industry changing restrictions. Please, **do not** suggest to your customers to call WSSC for answers, be informed and fully explain the requirement when you sell the job.

You can download/print this document from our Regulatory Services web page at: Safety Alert: Installation Restrictions Regarding Outside Masonry Chimneys or go to:

- [www.wsscwater.com](http://www.wsscwater.com)

- Locate the blue horizontal bar/stripe near the center of the home page.
- Pass your cursor over ‘Businesses’.
- A drop down menu will appear; Click on ‘Regulatory Services’.
- Click on the ‘Plumbing and Gas Inspections’ pipe branch.



- Click on the ‘Safety Alert: Installation Restrictions Regarding Masonry Chimneys’ link shown in red ink and located just under the pipe header.

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## E-Plan Review:

WSSC Plans Review staff is pleased to announce the second phase of electronic plans review. Beginning May 15, 2014, all plan submittals containing 20 or more sheets shall be submitted electronically utilizing the e-Plan Review system ProjectDox. Anyone wishing to voluntarily submit ePlans for smaller projects is highly encouraged to do so.

Procedure for submittal: After you visit the permit counter, bring your validated permit application form

to the plan review counter. A reviewer will gather some information from you and then you’ll receive an email “invite” to upload your electronic plan files; which you can do from the comfort of your office or where ever. All status notifications will be via email. See a Plans Reviewer for more details.

Next phase of ePlans Review: When the new permitting system goes live (possibly Fall/Winter 2014), all medium and large

plumbing plans will be required to be submitted electronically. We highly encourage everyone to get acclimated with e-Plan Review now.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WSSC will be CLOSED on the following dates:

Monday May 26, 2014

Friday July 4, 2014

## E-Permitting is coming to WSSC:

WSSC and its software vendor are hard at work implementing a web based permit system for the plumbing and gasfitting community. While an official roll-out date is still premature, both sides are currently optimistic with a 'go live' later this year.

This new system features the following web based (online) functionality:

1. Submit and pay for permit applications (short form, long forms, service connections, etc.)



2. Inspections scheduling and real time results
3. Licensing: new applications, renewals & and status check



## Cross Connection:

It is that time of year, finally!!! Please remember that backflow preventers serving seasonal systems such as irrigation and pools shall be tested at the time of start-up. While this has been a long-standing policy, it was codified effective May 1, 2013. Note: this also applies to backflow preventers installed indoors in a conditioned area. Even though the assembly was not de-watered, the inactivity renders the assembly most likely to fail at start-up.

### Starting July 1, 2014...

The Cross Connection inspection and support staff, as well as the WSSC Information Technology staff, have identified the need to convert the 'Customer Account Number' from a non-required field to a mandatory completed field on the test report submittal form. We have been in a previously announced voluntary period to acclimate your staff and clients; it is time to 'go live' with this requirement. Beginning July 1, the account number field will be a 'required' field to complete on the submittal form.

### **Cross Connection / Backflow Re-Certification training for the WSSC Plumbing Inspectors:**

During the month of April, all of the WSSC Plumbing Inspectors are attending their 8 hour Backflow re-certification class. The class instructors are WSSC's own Don Smith and Roland Ray.



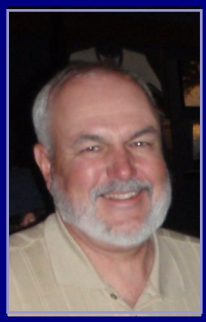
(Roland Ray and Steve Fleming pictured above.)



(Tom Spurrier, Josh Davis & Jim White pictured above.  
Jim White & Steve Fleming pictured below)



## The Enforcer:



**Ed James**  
Plumbing Inspection  
Unit Coordinator

Please take the opportunity to read the Inspector Q & A in this newsletter.

As you well know, lots of calls come in to my attention. Here are a few commonly asked questions that I receive from Home Owners:

*Q. The Plumber/Gasfitter did not leave or have a permit with them. How do I get my inspection?*

A. I ask for the company name. If licensed, I will be having a discussion with the licensee on the finer points of compliance with Section 106.1.2, 106.1.2.1 and 106.9.3.1. And of course I always check to see if the Master has a permit (see Section 108.4.2 & 108.4.5). Unlicensed installers are subject to immediate citations and will be required to hire a WSSC license individual to get all permits and inspections completed.

*Q. Why do I need an expansion tank and I am being charged extra for this?*

A. I first ask if the company has been to their home. (YES or NO) Did they show you the check valve/or pressure reducing valve (or have them show it to you). An explanation is provided as to WHEN (rarely required, however recommended by the manufacture) it is required by

WSSC. They are also advised that the installer needs to have their WSSC Master or Journeyman license and the permit in hand prior to starting work. If they cannot provide or show the valid WSSC license, contact the company and have them send a licensed individual to do the installation.

*Q. What time will the Inspector arrive today? Note: These calls come in between 9-11 AM.*

A. As Master of record and the responsible party for getting the inspection, if your Customer would like a time (2 hr. window), the Inspector needs to be contacted prior to their 7:30 AM departure from the office. No list of times is maintained and the Inspector will not answer cell phones while driving or while performing inspections. Call are typically returned around 2:30 PM.

It is also common for Customers to call without the permit or they have no idea what is being scheduled. Again, it is the **Master's responsibility** to be certain that the inspection is timely scheduled. Frequently the permits have expired or have been used at a different address.

**Now, for the RECORD:** A high number of homes are being "Flipped" (bought/renovated and sold) in both Counties without required permits and inspections. Numerous civil citations have been written and **3-5 Stop-work** orders are posted weekly.

Both Counties and WSSC are working together to prevent this when discovered.

One of the joint investigations involves a very nice first time home buyer that thought she was buying her dream home only to have it freeze-up two days after she moved in. The Flipper was featured on a local news program and is now facing several thousands of dollars in renovation costs, civil citations by WSSC and the County along with a civil litigation that I will gladly testify on behalf of the Homeowner.

We are jointly investigating two LLC's that have a combined total of 40 + known properties.

In case you missed "7 on Your Side", here is the link to the news report:

<http://www.wjla.com/articles/2014/03/7oys-economy-plumbing-customer-pays-thousands-for-shoddy-work-101241.html>

We are still looking for this individual. He is driving a White Dodge Ram with Economy Plumbing in light blue letters on the vehicle. HE IS NOT LICENSED!!!

For information about this individual, call or email me directly:

**Ed James 301-206-8616**

[eiames@wsscwater.com](mailto:eiames@wsscwater.com)



# A WSSC Inspector's View:

The WSSC Inspectors were recently asked to complete a survey of 10 questions. They were instructed that there were no wrong answers. Below are the questions along with some of their answers.

## QUESTIONS:

1. *Short form permits are required for many different types of jobs. What type of job is a short form permit used for most often?* The #1 answer was furnace & water heater replacements. Followed by a close 2nd gas appliances.
2. *What is the most common reason for a short form permit inspection to fail?* The #1 answer was H/O not home; no entry; plumbers don't tell H/O of inspection date.
3. *On an average day, how many inspections do you perform? (this includes both LF and SF).* The most common answer was 15-20. The lowest # was 3-7 with the highest # being 30.
4. *What are your most common complaints/frustrations regarding doing inspections?* Traffic and None tied for 1st place. The following are some of the other answers worth sharing: work done without permits; H/O being told that the Inspector was supposed to call before showing up; jobs not being properly identified; unlicensed person on job site for inspection; paperwork & computers; bad plumbers;

contractor not upfront with customer; inspections scheduled yet work not complete; additional costs for things not required by code or even necessary; parking and finally after this long winter, weather -snow & ice.

5. *As a WSSC Plumbing Inspector, what do you enjoy most about your job?* The #1 common answer was meeting different people (H/O, contractors, co-workers and other employees). Other answers received were: not a desk job; outside/fresh air; satisfaction of protecting customers of unsafe installation; work schedule; job security; still being involved in the trade in some aspect; helping people; pride of accomplishment; clean hands at the end of the day; enjoy the different types of inspections and finally, working with Ed and Tom.
6. *From your experience of performing inspections, what are your thoughts of the workmanship you see?* The answers to this question ranged from everything from poor quality; going down hill to just ok to good to generally neat. One inspector stated, "Generally very good. The size of the company has nothing to do with the quality of the work. Supervision (review of the job by the contractor prior to inspection) is lacking in many cases. This would

lead to fewer failures for basic inspections."

7. *Do you routinely see work performed without permits and inspections?* The answers here were pretty well split between no and yes. A few "not often" and several "yes, flipped houses".
8. *What advice or direction is routinely provided to the Home Owner?* Again, a variety of answers were received. They include: answering the question 'why does WSSC inspect my gas?'; educate H/O about required permits and inspections needed; explain the warranty-when it starts and how long it lasts; how to proceed after a failed inspection; make sure you get licensed and reliable plumber and explain the need of CO detectors.
9. *What is the average number of miles driven by an inspector on any given day?* The highest range was 75-100. The lowest range was 3-8. The most common answer was 50.

And here is the final question asked of the WSSC Inspectors:

10. *If you could, what is the best advice you would give to a young up and coming individual just entering the trade?* Here are the Inspectors answers (in no specific order): Always do your best and remember it's better to do

something right the 1st time so you don't have to do it a second time; Autograph your work with neatness; Go to college; Be responsible for your actions; Work smart, work safe; Learn computers; Go to Apprenticeship school; Don't get pigeon holed into doing one type of work; It's a good trade, stay with it; Stay up to date on Code; Get out; Take all tests and learn all you can about the trade; Show up on time and be ready to work; Get your license; Go into HVAC, it isn't over regulated like plumbing and it's quicker money with the least amount of call backs and finally, WHAT you need to do is given by your boss, HOW you need to do it is in the Code books, WHY you need to do it like that is the key to understanding the trade.

THANK YOU to all the Inspectors who participated!



Trade Humor:



Announcement: WSSC's Federal Credit Union has opened it's membership to all WSSC Licensed Masters, Journeymen and Apprentice Plumbers & Gasfitters and WSSC Licensed Sewer & Drain Cleaners.

Contact Us:

- Plan Review..... 301-206-8886
  - CC/Bkflow P.G. Co..... 301-206-8601
  - CC/Bkflow Mont. Co..... 301-206-7932
  - Licensing..... 301-206-8588
  - Schedule Inspection SF Permit..... 301-206-4004
  - Schedule Inspection LF Permit..... 301-206-8383
  - Anacostia Depot..... 301-206-4363
  - Gaithersburg/Seneca Depot..... 301-206-7365
  - Lyttonsville Depot..... 301-206-7340
  - Temple Hills Depot..... 301-206-7302
  - FOG..... 301-206-8575
  - Permits..... 301-206-4003
  - COI Fax..... 301-206-8884
- COIs can also be emailed to:  
[insurancecertificate@wsscwater.com](mailto:insurancecertificate@wsscwater.com)

**Welcome!**  
 To the  
**WSSC Federal Credit Union**

WSSC Licensed  
**Plumbers  
 & Gasfitters**

Checking • Savings  
 Holiday Club • Certificate Accounts  
 Visa Debit & ATM • Online Banking



301-206-8111  
[www.wsscfcu.org](http://www.wsscfcu.org)



Let us hear from you:

Is there something you would like to see in future issues of this newsletter? Email your suggestions or comments to: [bhouser@wsscwater.com](mailto:bhouser@wsscwater.com)