

# Protecting the Public Every Day

*Building safety professionals play a major role in keeping the public safe. They ensure that all buildings, including homes, businesses, and places of public assembly, are built to required building safety codes, which address structural stability, fire safety, exits, sanitation, electricity, energy efficiency, and more. These building safety professionals are responsible for protecting the public health, safety and welfare through effective code enforcement.*

They may go under the title of building inspector, fire chief, fire inspector, structural engineer, plan reviewer, electrical inspector, plumbing inspector, permit technician or simply building safety official, but the labels merely obscure their common mission to prevent harm by ensuring compliance with building safety codes before a disaster occurs. Building safety professionals are an essential part of the public safety equation.

From hurricanes to tornados, wildfires and earthquakes, building safety codes play a major role in saving lives, protecting property and reducing recovery costs often paid for by taxpayer dollars. The team of building safety professionals ensures that all types of construction are built based on the International Codes, which provide the best level of building safety in the world. The I-Codes keep buildings and communities as safe as possible—from the integrity of steel girders on 50-story buildings to ensuring a deck is properly installed at a home.

## BUILDINGS BASED ON TEAMWORK

Careers in code administration are very rewarding. Every member of this lifesaving team has important responsibilities, and most enjoy excellent benefits, wages and career advancement opportunities.

Every building safety professional team member plays an important role, addressing issues like accessibility, structural stability, fire and electrical safety, energy efficiency and more. While every project is unique, the following is the basic code administration process:

- After a property owner applies for a construction or remodeling permit, plan reviewers check the plans for code compliance;
- The code official reviews all documents before the permit technician issues a permit so construction can begin;
- Inspectors visit the site at various stages of construction to ensure that the structure is being built safely and based on the plans submitted in accordance with the I-Codes;
- Code officials work with builders to address any issues;
- When the project is complete, the inspector issues a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O).



## Advance Your Career!

For more information about building safety codes and local requirements, contact your local building department at:

**City of San José Permit Center  
200 E. Santa Clara St.  
1st Floor Tower  
San José, CA 95113**



People Helping People Build a Safer World™

## Careers in Code Administration

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# Different Jobs with One Goal: Public Safety

## CODE OFFICIALS

Code Officials are usually the executives in charge of a Building Department at the city, county, state or local level. They maintain all records related to permits, inspections, notices, fees paid and orders issued. They also help designers and builders with codes interpretations, as well as explain minimum requirements, answer questions, and investigate and resolve issues.

In smaller communities, one code official might be responsible for all aspects of code administration. In larger metropolitan areas, code officials often have specific areas of specialization.

FEMA/Amanda Bicknell



## PLAN REVIEWERS

Plan reviewers, or examiners, evaluate the project's construction documents such as architectural, structural, and site plan, for example. They ensure designs and proposed materials are code compliant, noting any concerns.

An excellent working knowledge of codes and reading drawings for basic construction techniques is required. Also, since knowing engineering and architectural definitions and symbols is needed, a background in either of these fields is helpful, but not necessary.

## PERMIT TECHNICIANS

With in-depth knowledge of building terms and codes, permit technicians review plans and applications prior to plan review, calculate valuations and permit fees, and issue permits.

They educate customers about the permit process and the meaning of codes related to their projects, as well as on why building permits and codes are important for public safety. Since permit technicians are often the customers' first point of contact with a building department, it's very important they are courteous, as well as efficient and professional.

## INSPECTORS

Throughout different stages of construction, inspectors make regular inspections to be sure the codes and standards are being followed and that materials meet specifications.

Inspectors do most of their work in the field and usually specialize in one of the following areas of construction:

- Building Inspector
- Electrical Inspector
- Fire Inspector
- Mechanical Inspector
- Plumbing Inspector
- Property Maintenance or Housing Inspector
- Public Works Inspector



## GREAT CAREER, GREAT BENEFITS

Career opportunities in code administration are available in both government (building and fire departments) and private businesses. Many states, counties, townships, and local communities have fully staffed offices of building safety professionals.

Not only are these careers rewarding and fulfilling, but earnings in the construction industry are highly competitive with other industries. Benefits vary by employer but many include paid vacations and holidays, medical and life insurance, sick leave, and a retirement or pension program.

## EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A high-school diploma or the equivalent is the minimum requirement to apply for positions as permit technicians and plans reviewers.

Inspector applicants may need some construction experience, completion of an apprenticeship program, two or more years of study in engineering or architecture, or an Associate's degree with construction, math or public administration courses.

Many jurisdictions often require code officials and inspectors to have a Bachelor's or Master's degree in a construction-related field in addition to field experience. Since code officials need to interact with the public, and sometimes the media, they also need strong leadership and communication skills.

The International Code Council® offers certification programs for all code administration titles. Being certified by the Council greatly improves your chances of being hired, and of securing a higher paying, more responsible job. For example, a permit technician may progress to a plan reviewer, inspector or code official, and inspectors may become management. Code officials and inspectors may also need certification and continuing education.

International Code Council chapters are a great resource to help you explore career options in the building industry.

## GETTING STARTED

To learn more about careers in code administration, visit the Code Council's website at [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org).

For specific job opportunities and requirements in your area, contact your local city, county, state or federal government, or the Department of Labor. Local libraries and colleges and universities can also provide assistance regarding degree programs in code administration.