



NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

Administrative Interpretation 21-1

Remote Inspections and Consultations

Code References:

- NIH Manual Chapter 1370 - Fire Protection and Life Safety Building Permit Process (2019).
- NFPA 1 – Fire Code (2018).
- NFPA 1730 - Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations (2019).

Background: The references above allow flexibility on how inspections are conducted. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted an increase in the use of remote inspections across the country. NFPA is developing a Standard for Remote Inspections, NFPA 915, which is expected to be promulgated in 2024.

At NIH, there may be situations where periodic and construction inspections are best conducted remotely for increased efficiency, safety, or timeliness. Appropriate situations may include re-inspections, simple projects, and straightforward consultations.

Application: DFM inspections and consultations may be conducted remotely at the sole discretion of DFM staff if all the following are met compared to an in-person inspection.

- The inspection is at least as comprehensive.
- The inspection achieves equal or enhanced results.
- Safety of all parties is equal or increased.
- The project is not complex and the area is not extensive.

Note: When the state/local jurisdiction has declared a State of Emergency, such as during a pandemic when in-person interactions must be minimized, DFM may relax the comprehensive or equal results provisions above to the extent practical to reasonably assure compliance.

Methods: The following methods may be used at the sole discretion and choice of DFM staff.

- Still photos, submitted via email.
- Recorded video, submitted via email.
- Live video using handheld devices with adequate software (such as Microsoft Teams or Webex Meetings), stable internet access, and a steady operator.
- Live or recorded video from an unmanned aerial device (drone) in compliance with NIH policies and local, state, and federal regulations.

Note: Compliance with privacy and confidentiality regulations is required. Flash photography or video is prohibited in areas of light sensitive research or patient treatment.

Procedures for Live Video Inspections and Consultations:

- Inspection requests are submitted to DFM via established methods.
- For construction inspections, approved permit plans or shop drawings must be both on site and with the DFM engineer.
- Location must be established with a geospatial mapping tool/software or by including identifiable locations on the video.
- All parties must be identified.
- Each party must identify themselves each time they speak.
- Picture quality and lighting must be adequate.
- DFM staff will direct video locations and viewing angles.
- DFM will issue inspection results via established methods.

Records and Document Retention: Video and Photo inspection records shall be maintained in accordance with Federal records and retention laws and The Joint Commission requirements.

Supersedes: N/A

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