



Response to Questions on the 2016 LOBs

Request By: Supervisor Gross

Relevant LOB(s): LOB #143

Question: Please describe what the Health Department's environmental inspections entail.

Response:

The Health Department's Division of Environmental Health (DEH) enhances the Fairfax County community's quality of life by protecting public health and safeguarding environmental quality, educating the public to increase environmental awareness, and implementing and enforcing local and state laws. DEH regulates the following through review, permitting, inspection, and enforcement activities: retail food establishments; public water recreation facilities; small drinking water systems; onsite wastewater systems; lodging establishments (hotels/motels); tattoo/body art operations; temporary food establishments; and mobile food establishments (vehicles, trailers, pushcarts). In 2010 the Board of Supervisors transferred the enforcement of the property maintenance code to the Department of Code Compliance (DCC). As a result, DEH's role is limited to assisting DCC with property maintenance enforcement by offering community outreach and public education specific to pest management.

The Department of Code Compliance was created in 2010 as a unified code enforcement agency to address life-safety and community quality of life matters resulting in violations of the Zoning Ordinance; Virginia Maintenance Code; Building Code; certain residential aspects of the Fire Code; the State's provisions pertaining to Spot Blighted structures; and the County's grass ordinance. Additionally, certain provisions of the County's Chapter 46 pertaining to structural public nuisances were delegated by amendment in 2014 both to the Maintenance Official in DCC and the Building Official in Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

The provisions under DCC's authority that most directly pertain to pest infestation are found in the Virginia Maintenance Code, which is Part III of the Virginia Statewide Building Code. It specifically addresses insect and rodent infestations that are adversely affecting a structure. Among a host of problems that can arise from this damage, of particular concerns are structural damage to load-bearing walls and supports, loss of weather-proofing and heating efficiency, and the potential for fire resulting from rodents eating electrical insulation. Such pests that can typically cause such damage include, but are not necessarily limited to, mice, rats, certain wood-eating ants, and termites. Insects such as mosquitoes, bed bugs, cockroaches, and others that do not cause structural or building damage (despite their impact on quality of life) are not addressed in the Virginia Maintenance Code and consequently DCC has no authority over such infestations.