



# A Matter of Jurisdiction

Have you ever had a problem and were not sure who could take care of it?

Understanding the Code Compliance Department's jurisdiction will help you understand the role that Code Compliance plays in our communities and the ways in which problems are resolved.

## What's In A Name?

The title "Code Compliance Department" can sometimes be misleading. The City of Fort Worth has many codes to enforce, and often citizens think that Code Compliance handles all of the City's codes. In fact, the Code Compliance Department only has jurisdiction over *selected* codes.

Within the City, there are specific departments devoted to handling specific issues. In addition to Code Compliance, departments such as Solid Waste, Development, and Animal Services enforce codes, as do Environmental Management, Water and others. For example, building, electrical and mechanical codes for new construction or repairs are issued permits and inspected by the Development Department.

## Code Compliance Authority

Code Compliance's primary authority covers issues of public health and safety as they relate to private property. Code officers do not enforce violations on public property, such as streets or parks, and do not regulate personal taste or preference. As the saying goes, "Ugly ain't necessarily illegal."

Despite their title, code enforcement officers are not peace officers. They do not have the same authority as police officers, sheriff's deputies, state troopers, game wardens or other peace officers.

## Federal and State Laws

As with many regulatory and enforcement agencies, the Code Compliance Department must adhere to federal laws restricting search and seizure. The U.S. Constitution, along with other federal and state laws, strictly mandates the way in which officers may investigate violations. These laws protect the rights of all American citizens.

Search warrants, court orders and administrative orders are tools used by code enforcement officers to enter property and resolve issues without the cooperation of the owner.

## Deed Restrictions Are Not City Code

Restrictive Covenants, more commonly known as Deed Restrictions, are provisions in a deed limiting the use of property. Code Compliance has no authority to enforce deed restrictions among property owners.

## Finding the Right Route

Each employee of the City of Fort Worth is dedicated to helping citizens resolve issues in a timely manner. However, this process is streamlined when citizens report violations directly to the department having jurisdiction over the particular issue.

## Commonly Misdirected Reports

Common violations that are often mistakenly reported to Code Compliance include:

### Waste Management Issues such as:

- Trash out too early
- Missed trash pickup
- Illegal dumping on public property

### Development issues such as:

- Building permits
- Garage Sale permits

### Police Department issues such as:

- Noise/Loud music
- Vehicles on the street
- Speeding in neighborhoods
- Drug houses/Gangs

### Transportation & Public Works issues such as:

- Potholes/Street repairs
- Burned out street lights

### Animal Services Issues such as:

- Loose animals
- Barking animals

### Forestry Issues such as:

- Overgrown trees
- Dead trees

When appropriate departments are a citizen's first contact, issues can be resolved more quickly and efficiently.

**For more information about the Code Compliance Department, visit us online at [www.fortworthgov.org/codecomp](http://www.fortworthgov.org/codecomp) or call (817) 392-1234.**

*Se habla Español*

