

INFORMATIONAL LETTER 0016-2009-A

Revised

Clarifications on Permitting and Engineering Requirements

On-Premise and Off-Premise Signage

Effective September 1, 2009

The Sign Code was revised by Houston City Council in July 2009. The changes adopted become effective September 1, 2009. Section 4605(c) **Application Procedure has been revised to state:**

The application for a permit shall be submitted in such form as the Sign Administrator may prescribe and shall be accompanied by drawings and descriptive data to verify compliance with the provisions of this chapter. Construction permit applications for any new signs, when erected or constructed to heights exceeding eight feet above ground level or in excess of sixty square feet in size, shall be accompanied by a design drawing of the sign structure and the sign, followed by an as-built drawing based on an on-the-ground inspection, both of which have been prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas; the Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.

Clarification:

The application for a permit shall be submitted in such form as the Sign Administrator may prescribe and shall be accompanied by drawings and descriptive data to verify compliance with the provisions of this chapter. Construction permit applications for any new signs, when erected or constructed to heights exceeding eight feet above ground level or in excess of sixty square feet in size if installed by an individual. Signs installed by a license City of Houston Sign Contractor must provide engineered drawings for ground signs over 19' and wall signs over 42'6. These applications shall be accompanied by a design drawing of the sign structure and the sign prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas; the Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.

First “Clarification” point states that individuals who apply for their construction permit applications for any new signs, when erected or constructed to heights exceeding eight feet above ground level or in excess of sixty square feet in size must provide engineering documents during the application process. If the sign has already been installed, the engineer will be required to produce a drawing as well as to complete the prescribed form attached hereto as Exhibit A.

These documents must be received before a final inspection is conducted. Section 4605(h) states that the construction permit is valid for 180 days. If the sign is not constructed or the as built engineered drawing and Exhibit A are not received by Sign Administration before the 180 days, the permit is considered null and void. If the sign was installed, a removal notice will be issued to the business and the sign company subjects their license to be revoked and citations issued.

Second “Clarification” point states that signs installed by a licensed City of Houston Sign Contractor must provide engineered drawings for ground signs over 19’ and wall signs over 42’6. These applications shall be accompanied by a design drawing of the sign structure and the sign prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas; the Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.

Third “Clarification” point is the Sign Administrator has temporarily halted the requirement of the documents needed as to the following *“Construction permits...shall be accompanied by a design drawing of the sign structure and the sign, followed by an as-built drawing based on an on-the-ground inspection, both of which have been prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas”* for new construction permits permitted after September 1, 2009. This process is being reviewed and will be updated at a later date.

The engineering requirement will apply to any sign (as defined in Chapter 46) that is being considered for refurbishing, reconstruction, alteration, enlargement, repaired, erected, attached, placed, fastened or replaced. A painted on wall sign will be considered to be exempt from engineering, however, if exterior lighting is added to the painted area the exemption will not apply.

Section 4608(j) was modified to clarify and maintain standards and guidelines of the National Electrical Code (NEC). The provisions of this Informational Letter shall not apply to same owners that want to modify their sign structure such as adding decorative elements or ornamental features unless it significantly alters the original design of the sign.

Important note: it shall be the responsibility of the sign company and engineer to track which Building Code is in use at the time of engineering and permitting. The City of Houston currently is using the 2003 International Building Code with Amendments. These documents may be found on Code Enforcement’s web site:

<http://www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/planning/enforcement/index.htm>.

The current wind design criteria is 95 MPH sustained with 3 second wind gust of 110 MPH. These are minimum standards and your engineer may design your sign utilizing more stringent or restrictive standards.

Minimum engineer plan requirements shall include but not be limited to:

(Must be address specific)

- All structural members
- Structural members and any attachments
- Cabinet Details
 - Framing details
 - Framing elevation
 - End view of sign
 - Top view of sign

- Pipe/pole attachment/mount details to cabinet (wood or metal)
- Pipe/ pole size (include wall thickness)
- Internal lighting and mounting inside cabinet
- Any transition
- Welding/welding symbols and rods
- Foundation details
 - Depth, diameter, steel, rebar, anchor bolts, fill material, etc.
- Mounting details
- Wind speed used in calculations

Alternative methods will not be accepted on the drawings submitted for permitting.

Sign permit applications could be delayed in processing while Sign Administration obtains assistance from the Commercial Plan Review Group.

In April 2009, operating permit renewal invoice notices were modified to inform the sign owner or responsible party to comply with Section 4607; Maintenance and Safety. All signs are to be kept in good repair and be free of deterioration. The Sign Administration Inspectors will be actively monitoring signs as well as those signs seeking a new permit such as adding a cabinet to an existing structure or face changes. If the sign appears to require maintenance, the site inspection could be denied and cause delay until the maintenance of the sign meets the standards and requirements of the code. It is possible that an additional repair permit could be required to perform the necessary work. Please call and speak with one of our plan checkers to determine.

Helpful Chapters of the Building Code include:

- Chapter 16, Structural
- Chapter 17, Structural Test and Special Inspections
- Chapter 18, Soil and Foundations
- Chapter 46, Sign Code. (printed separately). May be downloaded from Sign Administration web site.
 1. Section 4609 for additional references.
- Electrical Code and N.E.C. for electrical signs.

The engineered drawings must reflect which building code is being used and indicate the wind speed on the drawings.

The Sign Administrator reserves the right to require additional information as may be required to determine compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations.

EXHIBIT A

Date: _____

TO: Sign Administrator
City of Houston
Sign Administration Group
Planning and Development Services Division
Public Works and Engineering Department
P.O. Box 61167
Houston, Texas 77208-1167

REF: _____ / _____
Address of Sign Zip Code

Company Name: _____

This is to certify that the sign(s) were built as per the engineered drawings and complies with the Building Code/Sign Code. Attached is the **original** of the "as built" drawing(s) of which I have sealed.

To the best of my knowledge and in conformance with the design professional's permitted construction plans and specifications, the workmanship meets or exceeds the provisions of the Code.

_____/_____
Signature, Number, Seal Date

Print Name

=====
Sign Administration Use Only

Date Rec. _____ Inspector Assigned _____

Final: Yes / No. If "no", must explain:
Circle One

Sign Co notified of deficiencies? _____ Comments in computer? _____