



# **Improving Code Enforcement Officer Interpersonal Skills**

# Learning Agreement

- Focus on gaining skills.
- Leave other workplace issues behind.
- Keep an open mind and be respectful.
- Actively Participate.
- Be sensitive to the varying skill levels.
- Adhere to agreed upon time frames.
- Share skills and experiences.
- Others?

# Module 1: Introduction and Overview

# Introduction and Overview

A credible Code Enforcement Officer will:

- gain the trust of the community, and
- increase the credibility of their respective organization.

# Goal

- This seminar is intended to familiarize participants with the skills needed to increase credibility.
- Participants will become more aware of their strengths and areas of improvement.

# Objectives

- List personal strengths and weaknesses identified through a self assessment inventory that assesses personal interaction, professional presentation, technical competence and work process skills and abilities.
- Define the personal interaction qualities of a credible code enforcement professional.
- Describe how a credible code enforcement professional conveys a professional presentation.
- Explain essential practices and communication skills for a credible code enforcement professional.

# Objectives

- Describe basic technical competencies that a code enforcement professional must possess to be perceived as credible.
- Describe the critical knowledge and skills necessary for managing efficient work processes in a building department.
- Develop personal improvement objectives and devise an action plan.
- Explain various outreach opportunities that raise code awareness.

# Credibility

- Can you think of a “credible” person you know? List some characteristics of this person.
- Take a moment now to list all the people you serve as a Code Enforcement Officer.



# Some Possible Characteristics

- Trustworthy
- Integrity
- Professional
- Positive attitude
- Flexible and adaptable
- Good listener
- Confidence
- Time manager
- Courteous
- Confidentiality

# Possible People You Serve As A Code Official

- Village / Township Board
- Mayor
- Property owners
- Contractors
- Occupants
- Community groups
- Construction professionals

# Credibility

- Your credibility is taken into consideration by every person with whom you interact. Your credibility as a professional is constantly in the public eye, especially during emergency management operations.
- Disasters tend to be the code enforcement profession's number one source of quality control.

# Four Credibility Skills

1. Personal interactions.
2. Professional presentations.
3. Technical competence.
4. Work process.

# Module 2: Credibility Inventory

# Credibility Inventory

- The Credibility Inventory is designed to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses as you relate to others in code enforcement.
- The inventory addresses the four specific areas:
  - personal interaction,
  - professional presentation,
  - technical competence, and
  - work process.

# Credibility Inventory

Who are you in others' eyes?

Based on four skills:

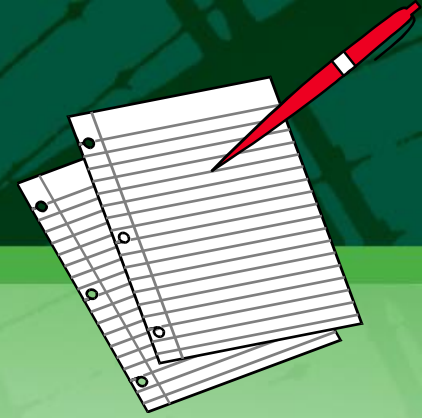
1. Personal interaction.
2. Professional presentation.
3. Technical competence.
4. Work process.

# Credibility Inventory Instructions

1. Read each statement on the credibility inventory and consider how others are likely to perceive you.
2. Enter the number you feel most closely reflects how others would rate you on each item.
3. Respond honestly. This is a self-awareness and learning exercise designed to gain insight into the responsibilities and skills required of a code enforcement professional. It will not be seen by anyone other than you.
4. Write down any additional questions or comments you may have as you complete the inventory.



# Credibility Inventory Debrief



1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. How does what you learned impact your credibility as a code enforcement officer.
3. What will you do in the future to become more credible using the information you just learned?

# Module 3: Personal Interaction

# First Impressions

- Making a positive first impression can sometimes be as easy as the following:
  - Dressing professionally.
  - Smiling.
  - Making eye contact.

# Further Impressions

## Professional Ethics

- Compromising the public trust not only jeopardizes public confidence within your respective jurisdictions but also tends to stereotype the code administration and enforcement profession negatively.

# Further Impressions

## Customer service

- A huge part of most jobs involves human relations. Success in human relations produces the trust, harmony and good will that are essential for cooperative work relationships.
- Often, code enforcement officials look at their job as a competition: win or lose; or them versus us.
- This approach is seldom successful. You always have to be aware of the fact that everyone you come in contact with is your customer.

# Professional Ethics

- **Ethics.** The study of right and wrong.
  - A code of conduct is intended to define the boundaries of acceptable behavior.
- Professional ethics is concerned with the competency of the professional, and the appropriate use of boundaries

- The C.A.T acronym can be used to describe three areas of professional ethical concerns:
  - **Competency**—standards of competency.
  - **Authority** —appropriate use of authority.
  - **Trust**—protecting the public trust.

# Competency

- Know the code.
- Apply the code.
- Experience in the field.
- Update knowledge.
- Consult with peers and other experts.
- Subject to appeal.



# Authority

1. Integrity
2. Impartiality
3. Objectivity

# Trust

- Being deserving of the public's trust means that the code enforcement officer places the public's safety and interest above all other interests (this includes individual, group or special interests). In addition, code enforcement officers have to be constantly aware of the environment in which they work.
- A successful enforcement code officer may encounter complacency by those they work for if their community rarely has problems.

# Who are the Customers, and What are their Expectations?

<b>Customers</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
<b>Contractors and Designers:</b>	▪ Quick reviews, fair permit fees, predictable processes, one-stop shopping, no surprises, help them solve problems.
<b>Building owners and Homeowners:</b>	▪ Educate and provide technical help, quick reviews, inexpensive permits, weekend services, on-time inspections. Protection of their investment and secured safety.
<b>Taxpayers and Elected Officials:</b>	▪ Safe buildings, low-maintenance construction, an efficient and knowledgeable building department, economic development.

# Providing Quality Service

- **Value**
  - Handouts
  - Visits
  - Newsletters
  - Public outreach programs

# Example of Leadership Model



# Example of Leadership Model

- 1. Champion Change:** Internal and external changes that affect the organization require flexibility in the workplace.
- 2. Communicate Effectively:** Commitment to and positive communication of the city's vision and values by all employees is important to all customers.
- 3. Create a Learning Culture:** All employees are responsible for creating and maintaining a learning culture within the organization.
- 4. Develop Partnerships:** The mission and values of the city are the foundation the employee uses to create, maintain and enhance professional partnerships.

# Example of Leadership Model

- 5. Service Commitment:** Public service is the driving force in the organization.
- 6. Think Strategically:** Thinking strategically is thinking in the long-term interest of the organization and the city at large.
- 7. Value Diversity:** Every person is unique, and the organization is committed to maximizing the contribution of every individual.

# Quality Customer Service

1. Dependability
2. Convenient access
3. The extra mile
4. Reward / compliment your staff
5. Fast service
6. Fair fees



# One Stop Shop Concept

- Based on a single direction and focus under a single leadership.
- All services related to project development of the built environment within that community are consolidated into a single department under one director.

# Principles of a Good Customer Service System

1. Organize around outcomes, not functions.
2. Provide customers a single point of contact.
3. Bring “downstream” information “upstream.”
4. Question each piece of paper that enters the system.
5. Redesign the process if it doesn’t serve the customer; then automate.

# Customer Service Activity

- Consider a time from the past year when you received good customer service. Determine what made that service memorable.

# Right of Entry

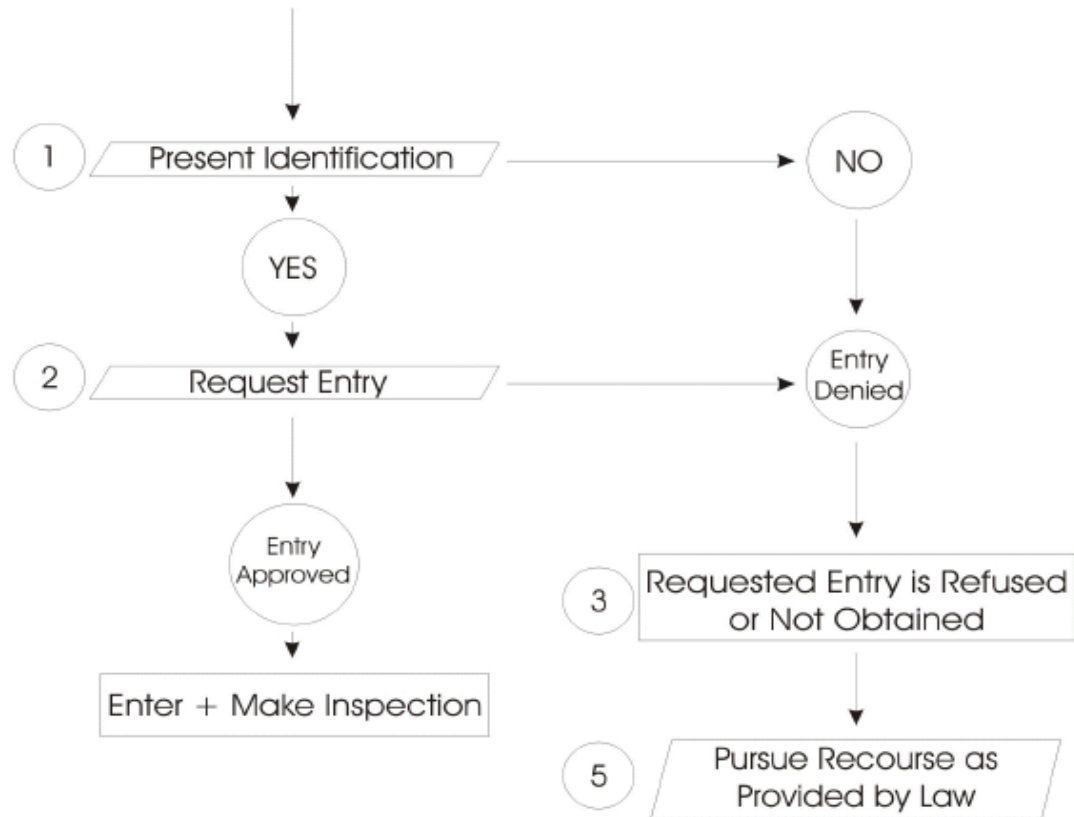
- One of the touchiest issues regarding personal interaction.
- How does the code enforcement officer effectively exercise the “Right of Entry?”

# Proper Procedure

1. Present proper identification
2. Request entry
3. Requested entry is refused or not obtained
4. Reasonable cause to believe a code violation exists
5. Recourse as provided by law

# Proper Procedure

4 Entry into Structures or Premises is deemed Necessary



# Right of Entry Discussion

- The code officer's right of entry has been challenged in the courts. Two significant right of entry cases have been heard in the United States Supreme Court. It is important to understand the rulings that were handed down in these cases. The outcomes of the cases are on the next page.
  - **Have You Got a Warrant?** Camara v. Municipal Court of San Francisco
  - **Fire!** Michigan v. Tyler, 1978

# Personal Interaction Activity

1. What are the personal interaction qualities of a credible code enforcement professional?
2. Think of a difficult ethical decision you had to make. What was the issue?
3. How was the matter resolved?
4. Was your credibility improved, maintained or harmed?
5. Describe a recent situation in your jurisdiction where a customer was not happy with the service.



# Personal Interaction Activity

6. What was the customer's perception of you and your department?
7. What could have been done differently?
8. Now consider a situation when a customer was happy with the service. What did you or your staff do right?
9. You receive a call from a concerned citizen who wishes to remain anonymous and has a complaint about the people across the street. The neighbors have made modifications to their only existing bathroom without a permit. The neighbor is concerned because there is no operating water closet in the home. How will you establish that violations exist?

# **Module 4: Professional Presentation and Communication**

# Professional Presentation

Positive professional image includes:

- Effective writing skills.
- Oral presentation of information.
- Community support.
- Media relationships.

# Effective Writing Skills

Writing effectively:

- Considering the reader.
- Outlining the content.
- Developing a draft.
- Editing the document.
- Rereading the text.

# Effective Writing Skills

- Consider the Reader
  - Management readers
  - General professionals
  - Technical readers
- Outline the Content
  - M.A.D.E. (**M**essage, **A**ction, **D**etails, **E**vidence)

# Edit the Document

- Sentence length
- Unnecessary words.
- Word length.
- Passive verbs.
- Linking verbs.
- Negatives.
- Complex words.
- Document structure.

# Oral Presentation of Information

Oral presentation skills include:

1. Define your goal, audience and outline.
2. Determine factors effecting presentation.
3. Create a “blueprint.”
4. Practice delivery.

# Community Outreach Strategies

- Two important messages must be conveyed to a community:
  1. How the community benefits from codes.
  2. How and why construction codes are vital for the protection of public safety, health and welfare.



# Community Support

- Open house.
- Booth/exhibit.
- Speaking engagements.
- Visit schools.
- International Building Safety Week.
- Local media.
- Educate officials.

# Media Relationships

- The media is a tool to get your message out. Coverage can:
  - Increase public awareness of your organization.
  - Lead to a better understanding of your mission.
  - Result in more public support of your work.

# Media Tips

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ask the general topic or if any specific statistics are required.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ask the reporter to submit a list of questions prior to the interview.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Go over information at least one more time for clarification before ending your conversation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ask the reporter to see his or her work before it is printed or broadcast.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Consider minor errors “harmless.” Call a reporter and politely request a correction if an important mistake is made.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Correct every detail. Most of the time, reporters get the basic message of the story right, even if there are some imprecise details.</li></ul>

# Professional Presentation and Communication Activity

1. Explain at least three essential communication skills for a credible code enforcement professional.
2. How does accuracy in a written document impact the public's perception of you?
3. What steps can you take to establish a cooperative relationship between you and the media before a crisis?
4. What things can you do to develop a positive relationship with the community?
5. Describe how a credible code enforcement professional conveys a professional presentation.

# Module 5: Technical Competence

# Technical Competence

- Competence as a code enforcement officer can be gained through:
  - Certification
  - On-the-job training
  - Interpersonal and communication skills training
  - Technical classes
  - Reading the code
  - Networking with colleagues

# Gaining Credibility Through Competence

- Competence is displayed by:
  - Understanding the codes.
  - Understanding the standards.
  - Understanding both performance and prescriptive requirements.

# Standards

- Use of standards in codes:
  - What is a standard?
  - Type of standards.
  - How do standards work?



# Four Steps for Using Standards

1. Identify the standard.
2. Locate book.
3. Locate requirements.
4. Determine if design meets the criteria.

# Questions for Discussion

1. What are at least two basic technical competencies that a code enforcement professional must possess to be perceived as credible?
2. Explain the difference between performance-based and specificationbased (prescriptive) codes.
3. A client consults with you in interpreting a standard. He does not agree with your interpretation. What steps will you take to ensure he has all the data needed to support your decision?

# Module 6: Work Process

# Work Process

- Another way the public will judge your credibility will be through your work processes. A successful building department is dependent on efficient work processes.
  - Planning.
  - Organization.
  - Time management.
  - Record keeping.
  - Data Collection

# Time Wasters

- In order to identify how time is spent, determine:
  - what tasks must be performed,
  - what resources are available to complete tasks,
  - the deadlines for each task, and
  - the length of time required to complete tasks.

# Manage Priorities

<b>“A” level tasks</b>	<b>“B” level tasks</b>
Are urgent	Are not urgent now
Have high payoff/rewards	Have a lower payoff
Are commitments	Are most likely to become an A

# Organization

- Paperwork
- Work Space
- Daily Tasks
- Staff

# Record Keeping

- What Records Must Be Kept?
- Laying an Audit Trail
- Levels of Record Keeping
  - Automated Storage
    - Networks



# GIS Systems

- All data stored in one place.
- Internet accessible.
- Information stored in the form of maps.

# BIM Technology

- Advanced technology even beyond GIS.
- Building Information Model (BIM) is a digital representation of physical and functional characteristics of a facility.
- BIM technology will allow a more advanced and more accurate system of using industry-supporting software to facilitate project planning, design, construction, commissioning and life cycle management.

# Work Process Activity

1. Recently, a building collapsed in your city. What steps will you take to provide the necessary records and establish your credibility?
2. List one way in which you can organize your time more efficiently.
3. How does time management influence the perception of credibility with the public and appointed officials?
4. Describe the critical knowledge and skills necessary for managing efficient work processes in a building department.

# Final Reflection / Q & A

- Take a few minutes to reflect on today's seminar and document your key take-aways.
- Any Questions from our seminar?

# Action Plan

- Based on the credibility inventory and the discussions in this workshop, list your top three developmental priorities:
  - 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)