

Economic Downturn
Impacts on County Building and Planning Departments
Washington Counties Poll Results
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For those interested, here are the results of the Washington Counties poll on impacts to Building and Planning departments due to the economic downturn. Not all counties are represented below. While many responded (thank you), others' information was taken from website news releases.

Clallam County

We continue to be open to the public 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F. Employees of the county were reduced to 37.5 hours seven or eight years ago. Four day schedule, for example of 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., M-Th has been suggested, but not approved by the commissioners.

Clark County

Permit Center hours have been reduced. The main permit center, located in Vancouver at the Clark County Public Service Center, is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. to noon, and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Battle Ground permit center is open Wednesday from 8 to 11:30 a.m. and noon to 4 p.m. Staff will answer questions and provide information, but will not have the ability to accept payments, receive applications or issue permits at this location.

Cowlitz County

We have had staff reductions, pay reductions, voluntary furloughs, and now (although not official until May) a good portion of the County offices, including Building and Planning, will be closed to the public on Fridays. Staff will still be in office working, but not available to the public

Douglas County

We have maintained hours, for the most part, with some twists. First, we went to a 9-80 schedule for most staff. That is, they work 9 hour days Monday-Thursday each week, an 8 hour day on one Friday and a zero-hour day the next Friday. We are still open 7 AM to 5 PM five days a week using alternating start and end times for the work day. Because Fridays have essentially half the staff available, we limit building inspections on Fridays to the area closest in to the East Wenatchee area, where most of our permit activity is. That is what we are doing now; I foresee further changes in the future.

Ferry County

The whole county may have to reduce hours—Elected Officials and department heads are now talking with the Board of County Commissioners.

Jefferson County

DCD/Permit Center staff went to 4/9's or a 36 hour work week on Dec 1, 2008. Closed Friday's. Office hours available to the public, 9 am to 4:30 pm.

Kitsap County

Kitsap County DCD will close every Friday beginning May 4th and have permit counter hours of 8:00 AM - 4:30PM Monday through Thursday...Admin staff will also be giving up an additional 4 hours during the pay period.

Kittitas County

We have not reduced office hours at this time but we have had a number of layoffs. We are also considering going to a 4-10 work week and we have split up the county as far as areas for performing inspections so we not covering the entire county each day and are only doing inspections 4 days a week to allow for an office day.

Klickitat County

No reductions in Klickitat County

Lewis County

Lewis County has not reduced days or hours of operation at this time. We have, however, had to reduce services such as planner and inspector availability due to layoffs in both of those divisions and in our permit center.

Lincoln County

Lincoln County Land Services (Planning, Building and GIS) has reduced the hours for the building inspector and the GIS-Planner to 32 hours per week.

Pierce County

The Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department (PALS) will furlough employees and close its development center for nine days over the rest of this year in response to recent budget cuts. The first closure will occur this Friday, May 1. PALS Director Chuck Kleeberg said building inspectors, plan examiners, permit technicians and code enforcement officers will be affected by the furloughs. Members of AFSCME Local 120 negotiated the nine-day furlough in order to avoid a large number of layoffs. Also participating will be unrepresented planners and managers in the department. The department's budget was cut by \$500,000 last month as part of a move to trim County spending by \$8 million. The Planning and Land Services Department has had its staff reduced by 43 in the last 18 months due to the decline in the housing market.

Skagit County

We have not changed our office hours, 8:00 – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, we have had a reduction in staff and we are taking five county-wide furlough days when all county offices will be closed. The days are May 22, July 6, September 4, October 12, and December 24.

Spokane County

Effective May 8, 2009, the Building and Planning Department is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30-4:00. Inspection hours are the same. The Friday Furlough Days are a result of a department-wide union vote to implement furloughs versus layoffs of 9-10 personnel. This action is on the heels of a 20 position reduction in 2008. Permit activity remains 30% below 2008 levels.

Stevens County

We have had to make staffing reductions but have not reduced hours at this point.

Thurston County

The Permit Center will be open from 8AM to Noon, Monday through Friday. Walk-ins will be welcome during those hours. A "Quick Access" line will provide customers an opportunity to drop off supplemental materials or pick up a needed form. A "Drop Box" will be set up outside the Permit Center so materials can be left from noon to 4:00 PM. Materials from the drop box will be collected and date stamped each day at 4:00 PM. The changes will enable staff to provide direct service to the public in the morning and process permit applications in the afternoon. Moore added, "With the

current economic slowdown, the number of permit applications has fallen off dramatically in recent months. The recession has significantly impacted revenue and forced us to make difficult decisions related to staff reductions. Reduced hours for the Permit Center are a direct result of those staff reductions.” As the economy improves, Permit Center officials will explore expanding hours of operation. County Building Inspectors, who support the work of the Permit Center , will be available from Monday – Thursday each week, starting at 6:00 AM

Whatcom County

We are in the process of looking at the options. One, vacant positions are frozen-for our department it's 6 positions (planning, both current & long range, bldg. svc.).When we were figuring out our budget last year we eliminated 6 positions so this means we are 12 positions down, with the six frozen. So when a senior plans examiner retired it was not filled etc. In addition, we are discussing shorter hours, maybe a mandatory furlough. Will let you know when the county makes its final decisions.