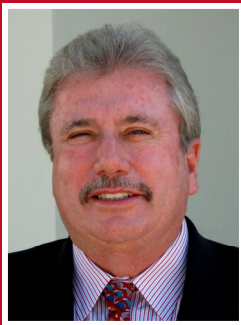




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THE POSTING



Director Glenn Baude



BRIGHT IDEA!

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Mission Statement:

"To enhance public safety and the quality of life in partnership with communities through fair enforcement of laws and codes."

Code Enforcement Administration

4080 Lemon Street,
12th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501
Phone: 951-955-2004



2008 Winner
California Counties
Challenge Award

24 Hours *District 4*

Code Enforcement Officer Frank Mendez received a telephone call from a concerned school bus driver regarding a large blue barrel dumped across the street from a school in the unincorporated area of Oasis. The barrel was situated on its side, with an unknown substance spilling out and leaking into the soil. The bus driver was uneasy about the barrel, as it was dumped off the road and in an area where students occasionally run for cross-country practice. Additionally, since the school's population is quite large, the high risk of contact with the barrel was cause for concern.



As a result, Officer Mendez contacted the Riverside County Environmental Health Department, which immediately responded to the spill. Environmental Health staff determined that the substance spilling from the barrel was used motor oil and consequently secured and labeled the container.

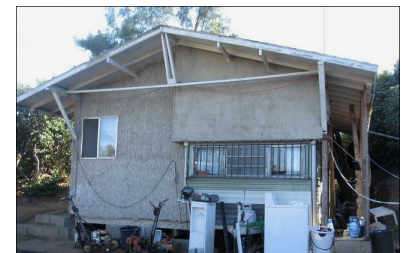
To contact Environmental Health go to www.rivcoeh.org or call 1(888)RC-CHA-EH

The following day, the bus driver who reported the dumped barrel phoned Officer Mendez to express his thanks. The barrel, along with the contaminated soil, had been removed before it could seep deeper into the soil and into the water system. Collaboration from the observant bus driver and both county departments saved the day in 24 hours.



Unsafe Add-On *District 1*

During a routine patrol, Code Enforcement Officer Manolito Molina observed an occupied recreational vehicle that was attached to an unpermitted structure in the unincorporated area of district one.



The property owner advised Officer Molina that the structure was built for additional living space for a family of six. Unfortunately, however, the structure was substandard and not permitted. It was stick-built with stucco siding, and the addition contained several electrical outlets in each bedroom and exposed electrical wiring that connected to the overhead lighting. The children's bedroom was built without a window, which is required for use as a secondary fire escape. Additionally, several items were plugged into one electrical outlet. The recreational trailer portion, used for cooking and bathing, spewed grey water out onto property.



Officer Molina informed the property owner of the County ordinance violations related to the structure and recreational vehicle and also explained the process in which to meet compliance. The property owner then relocated the occupant family to a different location and removed the structure within the 30-day time frame.

CODE ENFORCEMENT – THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Why have code enforcement? Do we not have the right to do what we want on our own properties? Is this not the United States of America – the land of the free? Should not I, as a property owner, be able to rent out my garage to someone if they agree to it? Should we not be allowed to throw our trash wherever we please? So what if I have two stripped cars on my front yard; it just shows that I can afford two junk cars. So my grass is four feet high and dry; it is my grass, and I like it that way.

Code enforcement is often misunderstood; it is not about denying people property rights, but protecting their property rights and ensuring standards that protect health and safety as well as neighborhood quality of life issues. Enforcing local codes is important because:

- It helps maintain safe communities and contributes to community pride and enjoyment
- It helps build/maintain property values
- Enforcement can act as a force multiplier for law enforcement, Environmental Health, Fire, Animal Control, etc.
- It serves to educate the public about ordinances and laws affecting their properties
- It helps to maintain and continue development of a jurisdiction
- It protects property owners' rights to enjoy their property without illegal infringement from surrounding properties

Enforcement is conducted based on the violation, not the violator. The focus of enforcement is on nuisance activity or structure, without regard to the source of the complaint or the nature or character of the violator. These are seen as violations against the jurisdiction and not against neighbors or other individuals, although some complaints stem from neighbor disputes.

Code enforcement provides violators a chance to comply voluntarily and is usually done with a flexible, creative, and helpful approach, especially when dealing with people who have difficulty meeting compliance due to age, infirmity, or temporary financial hardship. Seeking voluntary compliance first and foremost, enforcement efforts are directed at providing opportunities for solving problems and eliminating violations, not punishing people.

The Good:

Many of the people code enforcement officers deal with are just uninformed about the law and an educational approach often works. These are good people – just unaware.

The Bad:

Sometimes the Code Enforcement Department must deal with people who are involved in criminal activities and show no regard for the law.

The Ugly:

Jurisdictions often set standards to eliminate the ugly appearance of properties which decrease the value of surrounding real estate, increase crime, and detract from the overall reputation and pride within the community.

Philosophies in code enforcement can be different from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and can range from strict enforcement of codes to just educational programs. Code enforcement can be found in planning departments, police departments, building departments, economic development agencies, or as an independent enforcement department. The culture of a department is often affected in many ways by which umbrella department it is under.

Code enforcement officers must be able to perform many roles including mediator, educator, facilitator, and usually as a last resource, enforcement agent. Code enforcement officers have a difficult and often thankless job. Although they always try for a win-win solution, many times violators and complainants do not see it that way; one or both feel like they are not being served. Additionally, code enforcement officers deal with many of the people law enforcement agencies deal with. They do this without backup and without many of the safety and enforcement tools that law enforcement officers have at their disposal. Someone who is conducting criminal activity is usually not concerned with the condition of their property.

Overall, code enforcement is a vital tool in establishing the identity and value of a community. Most people wish to live in a nice and safe neighborhood, and enforcement of local ordinances sets standards for a community and aids in establishing and maintaining the quality of life desired by residents. *Written by Glenn Baude, Code Enforcement Director*



TIP: To verify what amount of storage is allowed on your property go to www.rctlma.org/planning/ and click on zoning information or call (951) 955-3200.



Bank-Owned Properties: Opportunity Knocks *District 2*

It is unfortunate when one loses their home due to the current downturn in the economy. On the plus side, however, this may be an opportunity for the Riverside County Code Enforcement Department to turn a negative experience into a positive one.

For years, county residents have been building structures, adding room additions to their homes, and converting garages and barns into living space without first obtaining the required building permit(s). While Code Enforcement inspects bank-owned properties as part of the abandoned and distressed residential property ordinance, the Department is able to identify unpermitted buildings and conversions.

After properties are identified as being in violation of a county ordinance, the standard Code Enforcement Department process is followed, and a relationship is typically formed with a realtor and/or lending institution to either obtain the applicable building permit(s) or demolish the unpermitted construction. Finally, the new owner is provided with peace of mind from a violation-free property.



Unpermitted room additions



Additions removed

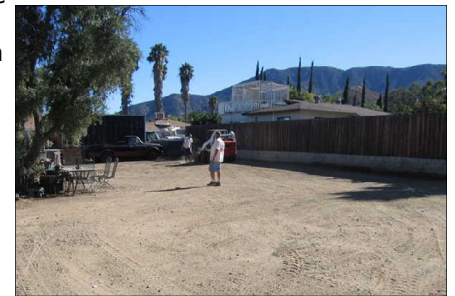
Voluntary Compliance Making a Difference *District 1*

This property is a commercially-zoned and undeveloped parcel in the unincorporated area of Lakeland Village. The Code officer responded to a complaint of the parcel being used for excessive outside storage.

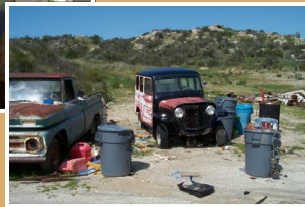
Officer Thomas McMullen made contact with the owner of the property and was given consent to inspect the lot. Nearly the entire parcel was filled with various scrap metal and household items. Also, there were two 400-square foot, unpermitted sheds on the property.

Since the owner was using his lot for personal storage, he was initially apprehensive about going through the work of clearing it, as the parcel would remain empty and unusable.

Nonetheless, after Officer McMullen explained the code violations concerning the property and the negative impact made to the neighborhood, the owner voluntarily cleared the lot of the sheds and all storage items.



Lot cleared of all sheds and storage items



District 5
With a little help from friends, a Nuevo property owner was able to remove these inoperable vehicles from their parcel.



Help Is On The Way *District 3*

One morning in District 3, Officer Carol Forrey and Technician Anita Bustillos left the Murrieta office together to begin their day of vehicle inspections in the beautiful town of Idyllwild. Officer Forrey was driving on Los Alamos Road, approximately 1/2 mile east of the office, when she and Technician Bustillos noticed an elderly man lying on the side of the road with his legs into the #2 lane of traffic. Officer Forrey immediately stopped the unit, blocked the traffic, and turned on the vehicle's light bar in order to assist the elderly man who appeared to be experiencing a seizure. After surveying the scene and ensuring the safety of everyone, Technician Bustillos assisted the man as Officer Forrey called 9-1-1.

While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive, the officer and technician continued to monitor the elderly man's condition. A few motorists stopped to assist with directing traffic and another person, with knowledge of seizures, helped by keeping the man comfortable and safe.

As the man overcame his seizure, the Murrieta Police Department, Murrieta Fire, and paramedics arrived at the scene. Recognizing that traffic was creating an unsafe environment for all, the Code Enforcement staff remained at the location directing traffic until emergency personnel cleared the scene.

Fighting Blight *District 2*

Oftentimes, while in the field, a code enforcement officer will encounter a property in a community that demands immediate attention. This particular property is located in the neighborhood of Mira Loma and situated near a popular thoroughfare that is traveled daily by hundreds of local residents. The seemingly abandoned, substandard structures on the parcel attracted illegal dumping, vandalism, squatting, and were an obvious blight to the community.

Code Enforcement Officer Diana Parra contacted the owner of this property, explained why the poor condition of the property was considered a violation of several county ordinances, and outlined the expectations and a timeline for action to meet compliance.

Unfortunately, related costs to rehabilitate the substandard structures were out of the property owner's reach, making demolition the only option for compliance. As a result, the property owner assembled a crew



to clean up the parcel; and with aid of a Community Development Block Grant, 180 cubic yards of dumped household trash, furniture, and debris were collected and disposed of. Additionally, a referral was made to the Riverside County Economic Development Agency for demolition and abatement of the dilapidated structures.



Today, nearby residents are appreciative of the efforts made to clear the property. They no longer focus on this previous eyesore nor worry about the unwanted activity it attracted to their neighborhood. Upon re-inspection, Officer Parra received two "thumbs up" from a grateful resident out for his daily walk.

From History to Misery *District 4*

The unincorporated area of Indio, known as Boyle Heights, is an area with homes built over 50 years ago. This Swingle Avenue house was considered a historical landmark where the Swingle family once lived, hence the name of the street.

This house was part of a development of homes, which included plans to restore the dwelling. Instead, however, the property went on a quick road to dilapidation. Neighbors reported that kids were loitering in the abandoned home, and Sheriff's Department deputies were continuously dispatched to the property. Code Enforcement Officer Frank Mendez responded to the home. He inspected the structure on Swingle Avenue and posted the house as substandard.

Regrettably, attempts to have the property owner repair the home were unsuccessful. The dwelling was further vandalized and sadly caught fire. By this time, the case had been submitted for abatement by Officer Mendez, and the property owners then finally contacted the officer.

In a matter of days, the once-considered historical landmark was removed. Now the area residents can enjoy their neighborhood's tranquility as in the past.



Calendar of Community Events September~November 2011

SEPTEMBER

- 24 Home Gardens Cleanup (2)
- Woodcrest Cleanup (1)
(curbside only)

OCTOBER

- 1 Valle Vista/E. Hemet Cleanup (3)
- Trashbuster Day (4)
- Mead Vly Health & Safety Fair (1)
- 8 Lake Mathews Cleanup (1)
(curbside only)
- 15 Romoland/Homeland Cleanup (5)
- 22 Meadowbrook/Good Hope
Cleanup (5)
- Mead Valley Tire Amnesty Event
(Countywide)

NOVEMBER

- 5 Cabazon/Whitewater Cleanup (5)
- Anza Tire Amnesty Event
(Countywide)
- 12 Winchester Cleanup (3)
- 19 Lakeland Village Cleanup (1)
- North Shore Cleanup



Contact your local
Code Enforcement Office

MURRIETA OFFICE (1) - 951.600.6650 MEAD VALLEY OFFICE (1) - 951.657.0122
 JURUPA OFFICE (2) - 951.275.8739 HOME GARDENS OFFICE (2) - 951.280.4100
 MURRIETA OFFICE (3) - 951.600.6140 PALM DESERT (4) - 760.393.3344
 MORENO VALLEY OFFICE (5) - 951.485.5840