

MANAGEMENT TRENDS

Navigating Local and State Requirements

By Erin Spiliotopoulos, CMCA, AMS, PCAM,
Matrix Property Management Group, LLC

One of the most challenging aspects of community management is locating, understanding, and complying with the ordinances, regulations, and codes that apply to a community. Whether it involves fire regulations, façade inspections, Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requirements, or Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) compliance, determining the appropriate course of action can be difficult—especially for those who are new to a particular area.

You may wonder why these regulations are so important. The reality is that every state, municipality, and community has unique requirements designed to ensure the safety and well-being of residents and the buildings they occupy. These regulations establish standards for community living and help ensure that managers, board members, and residents are meeting their responsibilities.

Below are several areas that managers, board members, and community members should be aware of when working within community associations.

Managers and Board Members

- State-required inspections, including DCA and DEP requirements
- Local inspections conducted by fire marshals and municipal officials
- Façade and structural integrity inspections
- Compliance with state and local safety regulations

Community Members

- Compliance with DCA inspections and local fire code requirements
- Understanding state, county, and municipal regulations that affect residents
- Rental-related requirements, including Certificates of Occupancy and other municipal approvals

As noted, every state, town, and city has different require-



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ments. Knowing where to find accurate information and how to keep your community informed is essential. While navigating these regulations can be challenging, the following tips can help simplify the process.

Know Where to Look

Staying informed about state laws and regulatory changes is an important first step. Industry organizations such as CAI provide valuable resources and educational opportunities that help managers and board members understand new requirements. For example, reserve study legislation has been widely discussed through CAI/NJ initiatives and educational programs hosted by industry vendors. These resources can provide guidance on how communities should move forward and remain compliant.

Local officials can also serve as valuable resources. Building relationships with municipal departments and regulatory agencies can help ensure that your community remains informed about local ordinances and inspection requirements.

Don't Be Afraid to Call

While maintaining written records through email is important, sometimes a phone call is the quickest and most effective way to get answers. Establishing a relationship with a knowledgeable contact—whether it is a DCA representative, local fire marshal, or municipal official—can save significant time and reduce confusion. Having a trusted point of contact who is willing to answer questions and provide clarification can be invaluable when navigating compliance requirements.

Meet On-Site When Possible

Whenever feasible, meeting with inspectors and regulatory professionals on-site can provide a better understanding of expectations and requirements. Seeing issues firsthand and asking questions in real time often provides greater insight than reviewing reports or correspondence alone. These interactions can also help managers and board members better understand what will be required during future inspections.

Create and Maintain a Compliance Calendar

Organization is one of the most effective tools for ensuring compliance. If inspections, certifications, or testing

requirements occur annually, make note of the deadlines and maintain a schedule. Keeping a spreadsheet or compliance calendar that tracks due dates for fire alarms, inspections, certifications, and other regulatory requirements helps promote accountability and prevents last-minute scheduling challenges.

By staying informed, building relationships with local officials, and maintaining organized records, community associations can navigate regulatory requirements more effectively and help ensure the safety and compliance of their communities. ■



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