

OCEA Register



Upcoming Events:

- Feb. 26-28, 2025—
Basic Code Class
(FULL)
- March 27-28,
2025—OCEA
Spring Conf..
- April 10-11, 2025—
OCEA Prop. Maint.
Class

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December 2024

OCEA Member Renewal Period is NOW!!

Don't forget that your OCEA Membership expires December 31st!! If you have not yet renewed, please visit our website to find the online link, or try following this link—

<https://fs12.formsite.com/cchristo/form98/index>

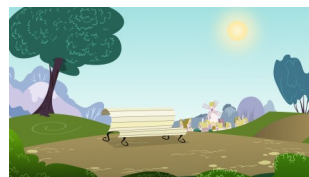
Alert: The OCEA Spring Conference location is changing!!! Quartz Mountain is not an option now.

We are going to be wrapping up details this week on a new location for our Spring Conference, on March 27-28, 2025. We apologize for the change, but it was beyond our control.

An email blast will be sent to everyone with updated location and information. We will also update the website.

OCEA Community Improvement Grant applications will open soon for 2025!

We will be offering five \$1,500 grants to communities with an OCEA member for projects to improve a number of items in your community. Do you need new playground equipment? Need to repaint crosswalks? How about a new tornado siren? All of these and more are valid options to apply for our OCEA grant. More info will be sent out just after the first of the year!



From your President—Brian Henry, City of Perry



2024 is nearly in the history books! It is crazy how fast this year has flown by. It seems like just yesterday we were all heading to Midwest City for the Spring Conference, but now we are getting ready for the next one! The holidays are upon us and I know this time of year can be stressful, but remember the reason we celebrate, dessert. I hope everyone has a great time with family, friends and the coworkers they considered family.

I would like to also take a moment to reflect on the time I have spent as OCEA president and once again thank you all for your support. While I did not run opposed, I do not take this position lightly and greatly appreciate the ability to serve you all. That does bring me to my next point, our spring conference will be here soon and I encourage you to toss your name in the hat for an office. This has been more rewarding than you believe.

I would like to also take a moment to thank my fellow board members, without these folks we would be in a world of hurt. They keep the wheels in motion on matters that go unseen by most. Such as working with Moore Norman Technology, making sure you all receive membership notification, keeping track of our finances and even helping me to stay on top of the items I am supposed to get done (such as this letter, thanks Janita). When you see these fine folks at an event, please make sure to tell them that you appreciate their service. Watch out though Travis is a hugger.

I am excited to see what 2025 brings and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

From your 1st VP—Shawn Maverick Fritsche, City of Okmulgee

Hello Members and Colleagues,

I hope this letter finds you in good health; that you have managed to dodge the cold, flu and Covid running rampant across the state. As I sit here, perusing the CACEO Survival guide and remembering the code official safety specialist training, I have been pondering my early years of code enforcement and how situational awareness training would have saved me some heartache.



When I came into this field as a young ambitious stud, I was firing on all cylinders and gung-ho to get some things accomplished. I threw caution to the wind at every turn without thinking about the consequences. My first setback came quickly. I had not been in my position more than a month when I decided to work a case of approximately 12 inoperable vehicles on a single property on the west side of town. On my own, I loaded up in the City's 95 Dakota and proceeded to the property. Upon arrival, I whipped the truck into the yard and did not hesitate to get out. I walked up to the first car, clipboard in hand, with my chest all puffed out like the king rooster. Before I could write down the first VIN number, I was surrounded by four vehicles that had pulled up and 8 "gentlemen" that wanted to know what I was doing. I was surrounded on all sides, with a dilapidated garage behind me. I had no way out, and all of them were very angry. It was my first lesson of "think before you act" and pay attention to your surroundings. Fortunately, I was able to smooth talk the owner, who was among the gang, and no harm was inflicted, other than maybe the need for a pants change and a launder.

That incident, along with a handful of others in my first months, quickly taught me to begin learning about how to do this job more safely. The goal, that I make it home to my family every night, moved higher on my priority list. I have figured out over the years, at the very least, always have an escape route and never let anyone between you and that route. If you feel the situation escalating to a point that you feel unsafe, leave, it will be there tomorrow. The goal is for you all to get home safe every night. No code case is worth injury or death.

I pray you all have a safe and Merry Christmas. I hope your New Year is prosperous and blessed. Thank you all for what you do within your communities to keep them safe and healthy

Shawn "Maverick" Fritsche
OCEA 1st Vice President

From your 2nd VP—Shane Barnard, City of Midwest City

Strengthening Communities Through Code Enforcement: A Commitment to Safety and Quality of Life—Code enforcement plays a critical role in maintaining the safety, health, and aesthetics of communities across Oklahoma. As cities grow and evolve, ensuring that properties are maintained in accordance with established standards becomes essential to fostering vibrant, livable neighborhoods. Since the adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) in 2009, Oklahoma has made significant strides in addressing property maintenance issues, zoning violations, and building safety. The IPMC, a set of comprehensive guidelines developed by the International Code Council (ICC), offers a framework for cities to regulate and enforce the upkeep of residential and commercial properties, tackling everything from structural integrity to sanitation and fire safety.

Oklahoma's Commitment to Code Enforcement— The history of code enforcement in Oklahoma dates back to the early 1970s when Oklahoma City became the first to develop a code enforcement program. This move set the stage for other cities to adopt similar initiatives, recognizing that well-maintained properties are essential to community pride and public health. Code enforcement programs help to address issues such as unsafe buildings, dilapidated properties, overgrown lots, and improper waste disposal. These efforts not only protect the public but also promote neighborhood revitalization and economic development.

Collaborating for Success—Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association (OCEA) serves as a vital resource for professionals in the field, providing training, networking, and advocacy to strengthen code enforcement practices statewide. Through collaboration, code enforcement officers, city officials, and community stakeholders work together to implement programs that ensure the highest standards of property maintenance.

As we move into 2025, it's important to continue working towards the common goal of creating communities where residents can thrive in safe, clean, and well-maintained environments. OCEA's ongoing commitment to supporting local code enforcement programs ensures that Oklahoma's communities remain resilient and welcoming for all. Looking Ahead Code enforcement professionals are often at the forefront of shaping the quality of life in our communities, and their work is essential to Oklahoma's continued growth and prosperity. By maintaining strong programs, staying informed on the latest industry standards, and fostering collaboration, we can continue to ensure that Oklahoma's cities are safe, sustainable, and built to last.

As always, OCEA remains committed to supporting its members and working toward a brighter future for all of Oklahoma's communities. As 2nd Vice President it has been an honor serving every member of OCEA during this year. I look forward to next year and wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! May the new year give everyone a much-needed break from tall grass and weeds! If you have anything I can help with, feel free to shoot me an email at Sbarnard@midwestcityok.org or give me a call at 405-739-1013. Regards, Shane Barnard City of Midwest City



From your 3rd VP —Jessica Green, City of Chickasha

Hello friends,

First and foremost, I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! It's hard to believe the year is almost behind us.

A quick reminder: membership dues are now due. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. Also, if you know anyone who needs to take the Basic Code class or the Property Maintenance class, be sure to visit our website for more details.

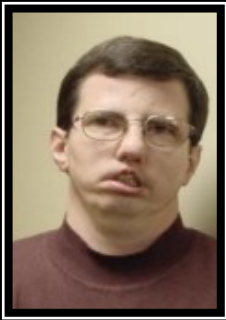
If you're interested in safety training, the CEOSF offers some great training opportunities—feel free to check them out!

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude for all the hard work you're putting in within your communities. Stay safe out there, and again, Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones!

Best regards,
Jessica Green
3rd Vice President, OCEA
Marketing Representative, Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



From your Treasurer—Andy Templeton, City of Sand Springs



Seasons greetings to all – especially since it is no longer grass season! OCEA was a proud host for the AACE conference in October, and the price tag impacted our treasury. Fortunately, we planned for it well in advance and had the funds to cover our expenses while maintaining stable reserves for all the other things we do. We discussed the surveys you completed at the fall conference during our December officers meeting. Ivan's Smith's presentation on code enforcement basics received high marks. While driving home, I reflected on just how much the profession continues to change and how important it is to keep tabs on those change. I've been doing this work for more than 25 years now, and the thought processes and interactions that go into code cases are completely different. I place a significant emphasis on probable cause and the safeguarding of Constitutional rights at every property. I also assure the fundamentals of my safety are front of mind – even if it means a momentary pause to get the equipment I need to best protect myself. I'm not perfect, but I do work to exercise officer safety with every inspection.

Awarement of Constitutional rights in a changing landscape of where and how you can look at possible violations. I usually start from square one by documenting conditions from public view and work along the normal pathway to contact from there. I recently observed a van in a driveway with the front axle up on blocks while following up on a similar inoperable vehicle case down the street. I stopped, began the documentation process and prepared a door hanger. It went to an immediate tow notice when I discovered the whole front end of the van was removed while checking for a VIN. It may be ho, ho, ho, let's give it a tow. However, I hope the property owner will resolve the matter before it comes to that. I work between 1,200 and 1,500 cases a year, and nearly all of them involve routine contacts. Our city is a pretty quiet place, so I rarely have a fear of violence. However, I strive to remember the "every day, every inspection" rule for officer safety and not get complacent. This usually involves an individual assessment of each situation and formulating an action plan in advance with ample contingencies in the unlikely but ever-present event that things could turn bad.

This is a festive time of year, and 2025 beckons in just a few weeks.

May it be a safe year as you go about your work, and may you always be mindful of your purpose to guard both the public's interests and individual property rights.

From your Secretary—Janita Hatley, City of Norman

I am happy to report that the reports I received about the AACE Conference in OKC were extremely positive! I hope that many of you that attended can now see the benefit of attending the AACE Conference, and will try to budget to attend in future years. I have another year in my term as 3rd Vice President for AACE. I would love to chat with any of you about AACE. Remember our OCEA membership provides a dual membership with AACE.

We've had some problems with our 2025 Spring Conference venue plans. We will not be able to hold our conference at Quartz Mountain as planned. We expect to have info available to everyone shortly after the first of the year. Be prepared for a conference in the Metro area, most likely. We've had some trouble with the State Parks, so we will tread lightly on pursuing them for our venue in the future.

Our OCEA Community Improvement Grant will open again soon. Be on the lookout for the announcement.

I cannot believe we are nearing the end of 2024! If I have been unavailable lately, it is due to the sudden death of my Mother on 12-20-24. Please bear with me if you need something, as I am struggling at the moment.

Our Feb. code class is FULL and we have several on the wait list. We are not able to squeeze anyone in, so be patient and hopefully you can get a spot closer to class time, if there are cancellations. We are accepting reservations/registrations for the Aug. code class. Please note, our class prices have increased this year, beginning with the April Property Maintenance class. All classes will now be \$200 and \$250 for non-members, which will provide an annual membership.

Keep up the great work in your Communities and never hesitate to contact me with any questions!
Sincerely, Janita



From your Sgt-at-Arms—Sheridan Lowery, City of OKC



Code Enforcement activities during the Christmas holidays often balance the need for community safety with sensitivity to the festive season. While the primary focus remains on addressing issues like unsafe structures, illegal dumping, and public nuisances, many departments adjust their operations to accommodate holiday schedules and community celebrations. Enforcement efforts may include ensuring that holiday decorations comply with local ordinances, such as proper placement of lights and inflatables, and addressing safety concerns like blocked sidewalks or hazardous electrical setups. You may want to double check that electrical outlet with that lamp in that front window that came in a box from “Fragile” and remind family that comes to stay in their RVs that they may not be able to hook up to proper waste disposal while they are there.

Those that know these references, I hope you chuckled. Additionally, Code Enforcement staff may emphasize education over citations during this period, encouraging residents to maintain property standards while fostering goodwill. Flexibility and communication with the community are key to maintaining both safety and holiday cheer. I wish everyone a wonderful and safe holiday season.

From your President Emeritus—Travis Guess, City of Prague



It's the Holiday Season and once again it seems the year has gone by so quickly. Everyone is rushing around trying to get ready for the arrival of family or searching for the perfect gift, and yet they don't realize it is right in front of their eyes. Actually, the perfect gift is the person,,,,, you. You see, when the presents are gone, and the meal is over, what is left? Us, friends, family are the true leftovers of the holiday and we need each other more than ever.

The gift of a simple hug, saying “I love you” or “I appreciate you”, all of these can be, by themselves the greatest of all gifts.

The very gift the Lord gave us. That gift is love with the birth of the Almighty Savior. And so I will end this with, I love all of you and I can't wait to see you guys at the Spring Conference. Be Safe and take care of yourselves until then.

From your Legislative Liaison—Ivan Smith, City of Edmond



Greetings Colleagues -

I hope this Newsletter finds you all well and in good spirits. Note I said in good spirits, and not full of them. I digress, the truth is I want to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a blessed holiday season. I for one, usually get very excited this time of year, not only because of the days off, but because it's a chance to see family and friends, enjoy some fabulous food, and of course a few of those adult beverages. While it may sound like I have but one thing on my mind right now, that's not entirely true. I'm actually thinking about all of you and hoping that while I certainly do want those that will be partaking in the various activities that we all participate in this time of year to enjoy themselves, I would encourage everyone to do so responsibly.

It's easy to get complacent and the next thing you know... well you know. Speaking from experience, that can really ruin your holiday and much much more. This is not supposed to come off like a sermon, I just want to share something that Maverick said to me that I had never heard before. We were at the quarterly board meeting in Prague just chitchatting and catching up on what's been going on and how things were going in our respective cities, and he told me about a safety training that he presented for supervisors recently. The training was about recognizing the signs of drug and alcohol use. I'm sure he would be willing to go into more detail for anyone interested, but to the statement that really got my attention.

"It's twelve hours from the bottle to the throttle"

I for one have never heard that before! I was always under the impression that there was some formula that factored in weight, body mass, time Etc. Etc... Well, according to Maverick's statement above I'm guilty, more times that I should probably be admitting, but guilty, nevertheless. I'll just stop here and leave you with this. The very last thing that I want is to dampen anyone's spirits, but if you are planning on enjoying some "spirits" this holiday season, plan ahead. It's way too easy to get an Uber, Lift or just have a designated driver than to risk what's at risk if you don't.

God Bless you all and Merry Christmas.

From Kelvin Winter, OCEA Webmaster, City of Norman



It is a good time to be a code enforcement officer. Our profession was fairly obscure when I started in code in 2002. While we still tend to be the junk drawer of our respective government entities (if they do not know what to do with it, punt it to code), we are getting more attention and more understanding about how important code is to a city (or county). It is all about not only maintaining the quality of life in our respective communities but increasing it. Do not forget the important part each one of you play in this endeavor. Keep on working to improve your processes and be as efficient and as effective as possible. Seek as much training as possible to enhance your effectiveness. Remember our code of ethics and stick to those principles and it will keep you out of trouble. Also, keep your mind in the right perspective and remember that family always comes first, not our job or even our profession.

I am retiring on January 3, 2025, so I will no longer be working in the profession. However, I still plan to be involved and will continue as the webmaster for both OCEA & AACE. It is now official that Janita Hatley, our OCEA secretary will be taking my place as the Code Compliance Supervisor in Norman. That also means that we will soon be having an opening for a Code Compliance Inspector in Norman if you are interested. Keep an eye on the OCEA website for this posting if you have a desire to work in Norman. Do what is best for you and your family when seeking opportunities for more pay, whether at your current municipality (or county) or at a different one. Sometimes, when weighing all the costs, more money may not be enough to pull up stakes and go elsewhere. However, sometimes there are other incentives that make it worth it to take a job elsewhere and move. Always look at the big picture and consider everything before making that kind of decision. Continue the good work and growth in your chosen profession and I hope to see you all at the next conference.



OKLAHOMA CODE ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Founded in 1994, the Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association is dedicated to the study and advancement of Code Enforcement activities at the local, county and state levels. Its membership represents both large cities and small towns that have an interest in enhancing neighborhood and community health, safety, welfare and aesthetics.

Like us on Facebook



Job Openings in Oklahoma

Norman will soon have an opening for a Code Compliance Inspector position open. Check the OCEA website soon, and the City of Norman website—www.normanok.gov

Send me your job listings and we can share with OCEA members!

OCEA Updates:

OCEA Membership's expire Dec. 31st. Please plan to pay them by the deadline, or soon after.

Be thinking ahead of who you would like to nominate for OCEA Awards.

If you are interested in joining the OCEA Board, make plans to submit a Candidate form just after January 1st. The election will take place at the 2025 Spring Conference.

Tidbits from Janita:

Please send me photos, funny or interesting stories from some case that you've worked, or a Before/After from a case that you've worked and I will add them to the newsletter. Our members would really enjoy seeing things from fellow OCEA members across the State.

You can email your newsletter submissions to me at Janita.hatley@normanok.gov and you can call me at (405)623-8009 or in my office at (405) 366-5318.

Thankful for our Partners/Friends



The Unified Voice of Oklahoma Cities and Towns

AACE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CODE ENFORCEMENT