

Manage Your Next Shot With the Safety Official

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Communicating with your local Building or Safety Official about your facility improvements is generally recommended. Preparation for the conversation is extremely important.

As you contemplate making changes to your facilities you will need to get the approval of one or more regulatory agencies. How well you manage this relationship could have a major impact on the cost and configuration of the facility.

On the golf course we all know the advantage of knowing when to "lay up" or how a specific approach offers an advantage. We all know that the odds are better when we make the "smart" play.

The same strategy should be applied when you coordinate with the Building Official. Knowing where to place the shot is crucial. For example, you would never want to ask the Fire Inspector "How many

fire extinguishers should we have?" I can assure you that his idea of "how many" is almost certainly more than the code dictates. If you do your research and know what the code requires, you can direct the solution.

Be careful with your knowledge though; you must not challenge the Official with your calculations or analysis. As a group, these folks are used to being pressured and you want to avoid their wrath. Rather, you should try to finesse the discussion so that your suggestion becomes his idea of the solution.

Care should be taken in all communications as the following examples illustrate:

- + Expanding building area may place the structure into a category that requires different fire protection systems.
- + Locating a building or an addition to

the building on the site could require or avoid certain fire protection requirements.

+ Alterations to a building may change the energy conservation requirements for occupied spaces.

+ Changing the arrangement for storing certain equipment and materials could be declared hazardous.

+ Changing one building can cause an adjacent structure to be updated.

When you prepare for your next project, take the time to gather the requirements and understand the challenges ahead. The key to any successful project is the same as a well-played golf hole. Know the course and place your shots well.

(Editor's Note: David Harchanko may be reached at 952-401-7889.)

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