



Jon Hutchings
Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Jon Hutchings, Public Works Director

From: Jim Karcher, County Engineer *GPK*
Doug Ranney, Engineering Manager *DWR 06/22/2020*

Date: June 22, 2020

Re: Address Corrections History and Process

Whatcom County Policy and Procedure

12.60.110 Correction of address number sequence:

The department shall make corrections where necessary to accomplish full implementation of the address numbering system for all county addresses in accordance with the following timeline and criteria:

- A. The department shall correct addresses beginning in 1997, and shall continue until the entire county has been reviewed and corrected.
- B. Notices of address corrections shall be mailed to affected property owners and become effective six months after notification by the department. (Ord. 2017-017 Exh. A; Ord. 2016-017 Exh. A; Ord. 2014-045 Exh. A; Ord. 96-049). *Appeals are referenced under WCC 12.60.040(B)(1).*

Goal

The Whatcom County/Bellingham Addressing Committee and Prospect Fire/EMS Dispatch have been working together to make necessary address corrections for the safety of all citizens, creating a consistent system that all emergency responders can rely on when searching for a residence.

Consistency with addressing is what allows all manner of agencies and people to quickly and easily locate a given address. An issue easily overlooked is that consistently addressed properties also allow agencies and people to quickly and easily locate other properties. Another way to look at this is when anomalies in addressing exist it makes locating other addresses more difficult which, if time critical, can be costly.

Why are some addresses incorrect?

Whatcom County addresses have been assigned in several ways in the past. About 40% of the time an address that is observed to be incorrect was assigned prior to adoption of the current addressing system on 11/12/1996, resulting in an out of sequence address number. Approximately 30% of the time, addresses that require correction have never

been officially assigned and are “self-assigned” addresses by residents that now need to be corrected.

Some properties are accessed by a private road which does not require a name at time of addressing but continuing development using that road triggers the need to name the road thus requiring readdressing of properties along the road. Access roads are not required to be named until the limits of WCC12.60.050(A) are exceeded.

Other considerations include: numbering sequence, facing front of home, road to which driveway accesses, EMS/Fire heavy apparatus considerations, etc.

How are incorrect addresses discovered?

Addressing errors are discovered through a variety of ways:

- COB, EMS or 911 can bring a concern to the Addressing Committee for review and readdressing recommendation,
- PDS can discover an error through the permitting process,
- IT can find a discrepancy while building the County GIS system,
- Discovered when addressing a neighboring property
- Randomly

How are addresses corrected?

Staff researches to try and determine how an address that appears to have been created outside of the adopted PW address assignment process could have been established. Using currently available GIS maps and following the address assignment numbering sequence, a correct address is determined. A notice is then sent to the owner, along with an address assignment report for their records. Per our Policy & Procedure, when the new address is officially re-assigned a six-month period is given before the new address goes into effect.

A notice is sent a month prior to the effective date to the Assessor’s office, EMS/Fire, Local Postal Services, School Districts, PSE, and Cascade Natural Gas among many other entities depending on relevance to the site. Unfortunately, at this time, Google and Bing Maps are not directly updated through this process.

Considering the busy and stressful time of the Holidays, the addressing clerk and Public Works’ Development manager agreed that no new address assignments shall go into effect in the months of November and December. A new address can go into effect during these months if specifically requested by the owner.

When an addressing correction is appealed the Citizen Address and Road Name Appeals Committee will consider the case. Per the established business rules, the first decision the Committee makes is to either deny the appeal outright or schedule a public hearing to hear from the appellant. In the absence of a Citizen Address and Road Name Appeals Committee, appeals are brought directly to the Council.