

Audit Procedure for Private Provider Building Inspections

City of Sebring

The City of Sebring, as a local building code enforcement agency in Florida, operates under **Florida Statute § 553.791** (Alternative plans review and inspection), which authorizes property owners or contractors (with owner authorization) to use qualified private providers for plans review and/or building inspections in lieu of municipal services. The statute permits (but does not require) the local building official to audit private provider performance to ensure compliance with the Florida Building Code (FBC). Audits confirm that services were performed appropriately without duplicating the private provider's work or unduly delaying construction.

- **Audit frequency** — The same private provider or firm may not be audited more than **4 times per calendar year** (earlier versions referenced per month; current law is per year in many interpretations, **with exceptions only for immediate threats**).
- **Exceptions** — Unlimited audits if the building official determines (in writing) an immediate threat to public safety and welfare exists.
- **No delay to construction** — Work may proceed after private provider approval; audits cannot delay progress.
- **No additional fees** — Reinspection/reaudit fees cannot be charged unless a code violation is found.
- **Audit scope** — Limited to verifying that required inspections occurred, were documented, and comply with the FBC (not a full re-inspection unless discrepancies warrant it).

Standard Audit Procedure for City of Sebring Building Department

1. Private Provider Registration

- Private providers and duly authorized representatives (DARs) to required to provide documentation with each permit submitted to the Building Department where the private provider will be acting either as the inspector or the plan reviewer and inspector. The City of Sebring will not allow for private provider plan review and then require the City to make the inspections.
- Submitted documents: Proof of licensure (Ch. 471 engineer, Ch. 481 architect, or Ch. 468 inspector for limited residential work), insurance (general liability, professional liability with 5-year tail coverage, naming City as certificate holder), and firm authorization if applicable.

2. Selection of Permits/Projects for Audit

- Audits may be random, risk-based (e.g., complex/threshold buildings, history of issues), or complaint-driven.
- Track audits per private provider/firm to ensure no more than 4 per year unless an immediate threat is documented.

3. Notification Requirements

- Private providers must notify the Building Official of scheduled inspections (24 hours, with date/time).
- Use the state's standardized "Notice of Intent to Use Private Provider" form submitted with the permit application.

4. Conducting the Audit

- **Timing** — Audits may occur concurrently with or shortly after private provider inspections (e.g., at key stages: foundation, framing, rough-in, final).
- **Process:**
 - Review the private provider's inspection log/reports for completeness and timeliness (must be submitted within 2 business days of inspection).
 - Verify that all mandatory FBC inspections were performed and passed.
 - Confirm qualifications of the inspector/DAR for the disciplines inspected.
 - Perform a visual/site verification to confirm reported conditions match actual construction progress and approved plans.
 - Check for proper posting of deficiency notices (if any) and re-inspections.
- Use virtual/remote methods where appropriate to minimize disruption.

5. Findings and Resolution

- If compliant: No action; document the audit.
- If non-compliant (e.g., missed inspection, inaccurate report, code violation):
 - Issue written notice of deficiencies to the private provider, owner, and contractor.
 - Require corrective action (private provider must re-inspect/fix at no cost to owner).
 - May escalate to stop-work order or withhold Certificate of Occupancy if unresolved.
 - Report significant issues to relevant licensing boards (DBPR, engineering/architecture boards).
- Complete audit report within 2-5 business days, summarizing scope, findings, and recommendations.

6. Documentation and Reporting

- Maintain audit logs (date, permit #, private provider, findings).
- Post the audit procedure and recent results (prior two quarters) on the City website (mysebring.com) or make available upon request.
- No fees for audits unless violations are found.