

Building codes

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Understanding of the laws and the reasons for them. "I'm not an expert on the BOCA code but I have always pretty much adhered to it, especially when concerning safety issues," he said. "There are things I have to go back and look up before I start a job but most of it is stuff I've been doing all along."

In addition to ensuring personal safety, the code offers property owners new protections from less than reputable contractors. "The better builders who have been adhering to the BOCA code all along will now have a level playing field on which to compete," said Halbing. "I don't know if it will weed out many contractors but I think it will have an adverse effect on those who have been getting by doing less."

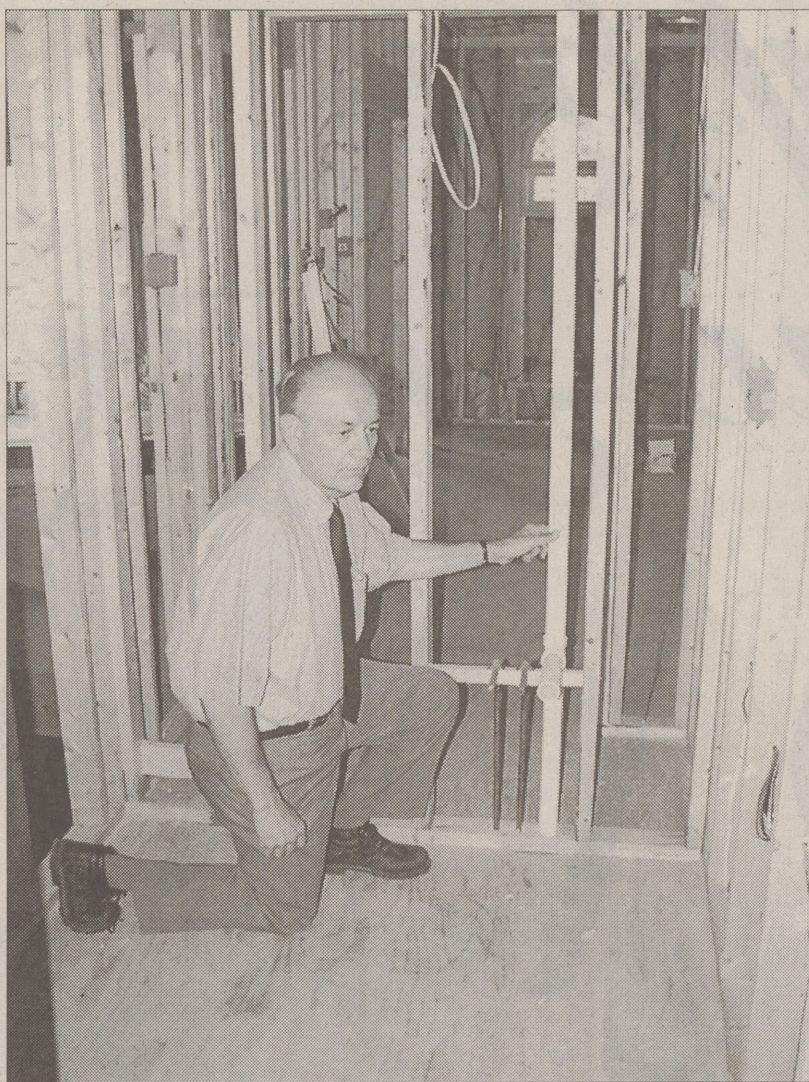
The responsibility of enforcing the new rules falls to each municipality, which will have to provide a BOCA certified building inspector at a date to be determined by the Department of Labor and Industry. According to the code, the window of opportunity for compliance will be between three and seven years from the effective date of the act.

Municipal officials who have been conducting building inspections without certification may be eligible for a waiver, if they are able to provide documentation of similar training and experience. "I think there may be a grandfather clause for inspectors who have been enforcing building ordinances all along but may not have the certification," said Krupa.

"It's not difficult to enforce; it's just a matter of doing all the checks."

John Krupa
Zoning officer, Jackson Twp.

Providing a reasonable time frame for compliance and an opportunity for experienced inspectors to obtain a certification waiver will ease the burden on small and rural communities. "I am an advocate of this law but unfortunately the state passed it and did not tell us how to go about funding the enforcement," said Charles Bartlett, Lehman Township Zoning Officer. "A typical municipality will have to hire a certified inspector and a secretary at a cost



POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK

Ben Gorey, Kingston Twp. building and zoning officer, inspected a home under construction in the Maple Crest development earlier this year.

of maybe \$40,000 a year or more. That is not going to be easy for most of them."

The PCCA also allows small towns, which do not have the resources or the need for a full-time building inspector, to contract with a professional on an as-needed basis or several municipalities may hire a single inspector and share the cost of his or her salary. The Department of Labor and Industry will continue to review and inspect dwellings other than one or two-family homes.

Dallas Township, which does not have a building code or a certified building inspector, is waiting to learn more about a possible training waiver before deciding how to best provide for inspection and enforcement of the code. "I know the supervisors got a letter about it but they haven't

talked about it yet," said Len Kozick, Dallas Township Zoning Officer. "This thing is being shoved down our throats."

Kozick said township officials feel the new regulations are unnecessary and will result in higher construction costs. "We have a zoning code and that's it," he said. "We never thought it was a good idea for the government to tell people how to build their houses. Big brother is always watching over your shoulder and this is going to be just another thing the government is going to step in and regulate. All it's doing is adding to the cost of a zoning permit."

More expensive permits and higher construction costs may be inevitable. "Municipalities will have to get the money spent on enforcement back somehow and the most likely scenario is that

permit fees will go up," said Bartlett. "A \$100 permit will become a \$300 permit and so on."

Halbing said construction costs may rise as well, but how much will be determined by a number of factors. "I don't think we'll see prices going up immediately but I think over the next six months to three years we may see some higher costs. On a \$100,000 house it may be a 5 percent increase where on middle to high end projects the increase may be less noticeable because many of the new requirements are standard for a structure in that price range."

"For example, the BOCA code requires the installation of smoke detectors in certain parts of a building where before the law was passed we left that decision up to the homeowner," said Halbing. "It's little changes like that which will be factored into the overall cost."

The additional safety measures are designed to protect residents, employees, consumers and emergency personnel who may have been at risk in the past. "I don't know anything about electricity except that when you flip the switch on the wall the lights come on," said Ted Wright, a Dallas firefighter and former fire chief. "But in Dallas Township there isn't a law to prevent me from going into a house and installing electrical wire."

"The state has finally said, 'Enough is enough; you have to meet these minimum standards,' and ironically, one of the reasons it took so long to pass this legislation is that municipalities down around Philadelphia and in some other parts of the state felt the law didn't go far enough," said Wright.

Others think the code will be too restrictive, will cost too much and will stunt growth. "You can't take Philadelphia standards and apply them to Northeastern Pennsylvania," said Kozick. "All you've got to do is take a look at the population and you'll see the kind of development they have down there isn't happening here."

Wright said in the long run, the uniform standards will result in better constructed homes and businesses which will attract new people to the region. "Look at Kingston Township. They have had BOCA codes for years and it hasn't stopped growth at all," he said.



Olga Kostrobala retires after 25 years

This year's holiday party for employees of *The Dallas Post* also marked the retirement of Olga Kostrobala, who had worked at the paper for 25 years. First hired in 1974, she worked with four different owners, and her unflappable style served them all well. A fast typist, she adapted to new systems over the years, most recently working on an Apple Macintosh computer, where she typeset all contributed copy, classified ads and legal notices. She also compiled the "Only Yesterday" column, a duty she took over after Charlot Denmon died in 1992. In photo, Olga Kostrobala opened one of the cards wishing her well in retirement.

Newspaper office holiday schedule

The office of *The Dallas Post* newspaper will be closed all day Friday, Dec. 31 for the New Year's holiday.

The deadline for contributed copy and photos for the January 5 issue is Thursday, Dec. 30. Classified and display advertising deadlines will be Monday, Jan. 3.

Squirrels

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There are many products available for feeding squirrels. There's a spring-shaped device that holds an ear of corn and can be hung in a tree. "There is even this Squirrel-Go-Round that holds several ears of corn and it's a lot of fun to watch," Mary at Agway said.

"It's nearly impossible to guarantee that squirrels won't get into your feeder," Margaret Reid, Treasurer of the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society said. "You can grease the pole but you'll have to do that every other day for it to

work." She offered some other tips. "You can keep the feeder away from anything a squirrel can jump from." She also has a feeder hanging from a window sill. "The squirrels now climb up on the roof of the house and are able to jump down onto the feeder. They're very smart."

Special note to Mrs. Parker's son in Nebraska: *Bird and Bloom* magazine would be a nice way to thank your mother for that *Dallas Post* subscription she sent you.

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