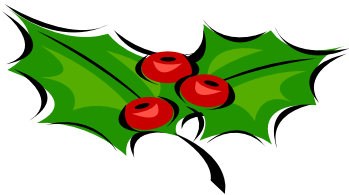


# Department of Inspections and Permits

Volume 1; Issue 2

Winter 2011

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



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*Robert C. Hubbard, Director*

Hurricane season recently ended and as we prepare for the winter months I am reminded of the unpredictable nature and wide range of weather events in our region. In the past six months we had a historical earthquake, Hurricane Irene made landfall and the remnants of Lee dumped record breaking rain in our area. This one-two-three punch might have easily knocked out a lesser prepared jurisdiction but thanks to our construction standards in Anne Arundel County and the diligence of the staff of Inspections and Permits, buildings in the County remained relatively unaffected from the onslaught of these natural disasters.

It is probably self evident to everyone that the building codes mandate that structures must withstand certain wind velocities. Given our proximity to the coast and the trajectory of hurricanes, wind loads are higher than the average for inland jurisdictions. What is taken for granted is that each building permit application is evaluated to determine if the building is designed to stay put in the

expected wind conditions. Once the plans are approved, inspectors make sure that the buildings are constructed in accordance with the approved plans and design. Before a building is insulated and drywall applied to the walls, an inspector will look at critical components of wind resistance including tie-downs of the structure to the foundation, floor and roof connections and the fastening of wall and roof sheathing. Being certain that these components stay together is important not just to the building being constructed but also to adjacent buildings. History from previous storms like Hurricanes Andrew and Hugo show that damage and destruction begin with flying debris that bombard and weaken other buildings.

Less apparent is that Inspections and Permits staff perform similar reviews and apply the same code standards applicable to earthquakes. Even though we are not in a geological area specifically prone to earthquakes, our standards nonetheless require certain precautions be taken.

Those precautions or code standards increase depending on the height of a building and its occupancy type. Despite the diligence beforehand, we anticipate a natural disaster may exceed our standards or compromise those buildings constructed prior to the adoption of current building codes. Therefore, our staff is engaged from the moment a natural disaster occurs until long after it is over to assist citizens with damage assessment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the permit clerks, plan reviewers and inspectors in all enforcement areas of the department for doing such an admirable job protecting our property and loved ones before, during and after natural events.



## FORESTRY PROGRAM: BRINGING SHORELINES TO LIFE

Anne Arundel County's Forestry Program is housed within the Code Compliance Division of the Department of Inspections and Permits. The Forestry Program administers the reforestation requirements of the Critical Area Program, and the Maryland Forest Conservation Act. A primary component of this program is the coordination of voluntary reforestation projects with landowners and community associations.

With over 530 miles of shoreline in the County, the Forestry Program also encourages homeowners to

implement living shorelines as a control measure to address erosion. Living shorelines offer non-structural, natural stabilization and reduce the erosive effects of wind driven waves and boat wakes. They filter and remove nutrients and other pollutants from the waterway. They also provide a food source and natural habitat for wildlife and aquatic life.

Characterized by wetlands, sand beaches, submerged aquatic vegetation and mud flats to provide natural stabilization, living shorelines are an excellent

choice for waterfront homeowners.

The Forestry Program can assist homeowners with living shoreline projects. They offer recommendations on projects and also will provide up to 2,000 marsh grass plantings for approved projects, based on availability.

Each fall, County Foresters and staff harvest seed from native aquatic grasses. The seeds are stored until early spring when they are planted. The seedling grasses are then donated to homeowners for approved

projects in the county.

The County has developed a shoreline evaluation and video to help homeowners determine the health of their shoreline. Visit the Department of Inspections and Permits website for more information:

[http://www.aacounty.org/IP/Resources/Shoreline\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://www.aacounty.org/IP/Resources/Shoreline_Evaluation.pdf)

or

<http://www.aacounty.org/RecParks/launch/livingshoreline.cfm>

Additional information: available by calling 410-222-7441.

## PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

*Bill Bryant, Building Code Administrator*

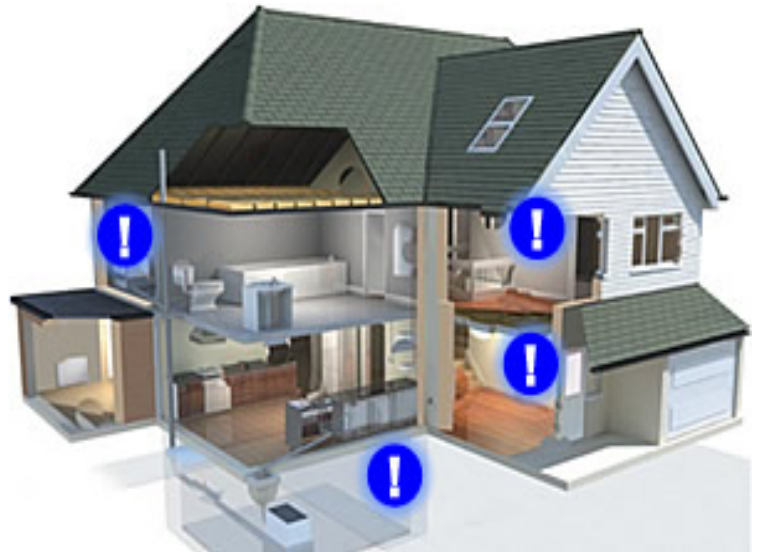
Carbon monoxide (CO) is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States with more than 400 people dying annually and thousands more seeking medical attention. CO is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that is produced during the incomplete combustion of a fossil fuel such as gas or oil. One way to avoid accidental CO poisoning in your home is to have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil or coal burning appliances serviced by a licensed professional every year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends installing at least one carbon monoxide detector in your home. Ideally, a detector should be located on every floor of your home and within 10 feet of each bedroom door and near any attached garage.

Common sources of CO in the home include leaving automobiles left running in an attached garage, clogged chimneys or cracked flue liners, improperly installed kitchen range or vent, cracked or loose furnace exchanger, corroded or disconnected water heater vent pipe, gas or wood burning fireplace, portable gas or kerosene heaters, operating a grill or portable generator indoors, in a garage or near and open window.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness and severe headaches.

Protect yourself and your family by installing carbon monoxide detectors in your home. For more information on CO poisoning and how to prevent it visit: [www.cdc.gov/co](http://www.cdc.gov/co).



Carbon monoxide detectors should be located on each floor of your home, including the basement, and within 10 ft of each bedroom and attached garage.

## LICENSING TAXICABS IN THE COUNTY

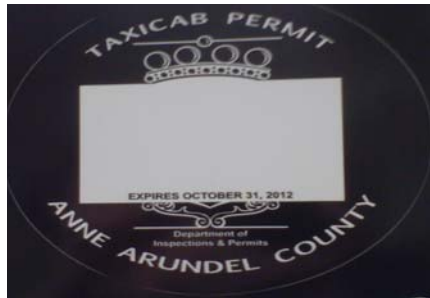
The laws governing the operation of taxicabs in Anne Arundel County are very thorough. Taxicabs undergo two annual vehicle inspections. Operators must be licensed and are required to submit to an extensive background check. These requirements are in an effort to reasonably protect the safety and welfare of citizens utilizing taxicab transportation.

The Department of Inspections and Permits is charged with licensing those who own or operate taxicabs for fares that originate within the County, including those companies that serve the Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport.

The law allows denial of a taxicab license if a driver is found to have a criminal conviction within the past

three (3) years or excessive motor vehicle violations.

In addition to verifying that all factory installed equipment is in good working order, Inspectors ensure that the fare meter is properly calibrated for time and distance functions. Once calibration is confirmed, the Inspector will seal the meter with a wire displaying a County marking. When a taxicab passes inspection the



operator is given a vinyl sticker to display on the right rear side of the cab. Current valid decals are black with an October 31, 2012 expiration date as pictured. (below left)

There are also restrictions on extra charges that may be allowed. For example, an operator may charge .25 cents for each suitcase in excess of two (2) and can also charge a fee for transporting your beloved pet, however, it may not exceed five (5) dollars.

*To compliment or express a concern about an individual taxicab owner/operator in Anne Arundel County, please call 410-222-7788.*

## SIGNS, SIGNS EVERYWHERE SIGNS . . . BUT ARE THEY LEGAL?

*Joannie Coleman-Casey, Zoning Enforcement Supervisor*

As you are out and about preparing for the holiday season, you may notice State road crews either removing or placing "illegal sign" stickers on signs posted along the roadway. Maybe you have wondered what changed and if any signs are allowed along roads in Anne Arundel County.

While commercial signs placed in state rights of way (roads & shoulders) without the required state permit have been illegal for many years, recent legislation passed in the 2011 legislative session imposes a \$25.00 per sign fine for illegally placed signs. After a three month education period, the State will begin levying fines in January 2012.

But what about signs placed in County rights-of-way? Like the State, most signs are prohibited in the

County right-of-way. However, six signs that provide directions to an event or destination, are permitted between the hours of 8 AM on Friday and 9 AM the following Monday. These signs must be posted three feet from curbed or paved areas and be self-supporting. Signs which are purely advertisements may not be posted in State or County rights-of-way. Violations are subject to removal and a \$125 fine.

Citizens who have questions or complaints should refer to State Highway Administration's website: <http://sha.md.gov/> regarding signage along state roads. For violations along County roads please contact Zoning Enforcement at 410-222-7446.

*The green sticker on this sign, found in a State right-of-way, warns that the sign is illegal and subject to a fine beginning January 2012.*



# EROSION CONTROL

*John Peacock, Environmental Code Administrator*

For centuries farmers have known the importance of protecting top soil and employed various measures to keep it from washing or blowing away. But the science of erosion control really didn't start until the Dust Bowl days of the 1930's when the federal government created the Soil Conservation Service.

Erosion is a natural process where the surface of the earth is worn away by the actions of water, wind, ice and gravity. Natural erosion has been responsible for some of our most spectacular natural features like the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley and Niagara Falls to name a few. Natural erosion is also responsible for the exposed cliffs that are visible when crossing the bridges on the Severn and South Rivers.

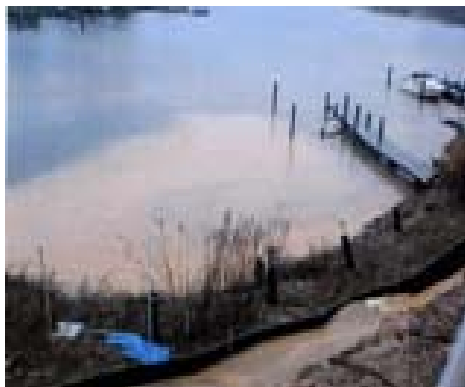
Sedimentation is another natural process where eroded soils from one location are transported by water, wind or ice and deposited at another location. Natural sedimentation is responsible for such geographic features as the Mississippi River Delta and the Nile River Delta. However, excessive sedimentation is also a pollutant that fills our waterways, inhibits the natural environment and depletes the dissolved oxygen levels in the Chesapeake Bay.

Natural processes, erosion and sedimentation can be hastened by the hand of man. This typically occurs when development activities serve to remove and reconfigure the natural groundcover. The Soil Conservation Service determined the factors that impact erosion and used them to develop the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE). The USLE can calculate the expected soil loss from erosion for large development projects down to a

well-manicured residential yard. The factors that determine soil loss are all related and are reflected in the USLE, which is  $A = R \times K \times L \times S \times C \times P$ :

- A = Erosion (Sediment Loss) in tons/acre/year
- R = Rainfall and Runoff
- K = Soil erodibility
- L = Slope length
- S = Slope
- C = Groundcover
- P = Erosion control or land management practices in place

Some typical values generated by the USLE range from 10-200 tons per acre per year for construction sites and 1-2 tons per acre per year for manicured residential yards. That is correct, even a well kept yard is subject to the natural erosion process. Just look in the street or sidewalk after a heavy rainfall and you will see the sediments that washed off from various residential landscapes.



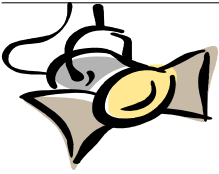
*Improper erosion/sediment controls on construction sites can lead to sedimentation deposits in County waterways.*

The USLE demonstrates that construction sites are most susceptible to erosion during the initial stages of construction where the existing groundcover is stripped away to make room for the new construction. As the construction proceeds and new ground-

cover is established, the amount of erosion decreases accordingly.

In an effort to minimize the adverse impacts of erosion and sedimentation from construction sites, both the State and County Codes mandate the implementation of temporary erosion and sediment control measures that must remain in place until the construction is complete and the final groundcover is in place. Under optimal conditions a 6 fold decrease in soil loss can be recognized at construction sites where erosion and sediment controls are in place and maintained in proper operating condition. However, it is important to recognize the Statewide standards for the design and performance of construction site erosion and sediment controls are subject to various limitations. For example, the State approved erosion and sediment control practices are only designed to treat one inch of runoff. Rainfall or snow melt events generating over 1" of runoff serve to seriously degrade the performance of site erosion and sediment controls. Also some soil particles, such as clays and silts, are too small to be filtered through the various approved filtering practices and too light to settle out in the approved sediment trapping practices. Nonetheless, all is not lost. As the state of technology increases, new filtering fabrics and chemical settlement aids are being developed to noticeably enhance the performance of standard erosion and sediment control practices.

Accordingly, Maryland Department of the Environment has recently proposed changes to the State Erosion and Sediment Control Regulations including the adoption of new Statewide Standards and Specifications for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control, which employ recent advances in technology. It is expected the new revisions to the State Code and the new Standards and Specifications will become effective within the next 12 months.



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: KEITH KERNAN

In this issue our spotlight is shining brightly on Keith Kernan. Mr. Kernan has worked for the Department as a Zoning Enforcement Inspector for the past six (6) years. He enjoys meeting citizens throughout the county and the ability to assist with resolving a variety of issues they may be facing. He also enjoys the great people with whom he works.

Prior to beginning his career with the County, Keith retired as a Correctional Captain for the Maryland State Department of Corrections in Jessup after 23 years. He found training new staff and making a positive impact on inmates to be a very satisfying aspect of his career with the Department of Corrections. Even years after retiring, Keith still receives expressions of appreciation from officers and former inmates whom with he previously worked.

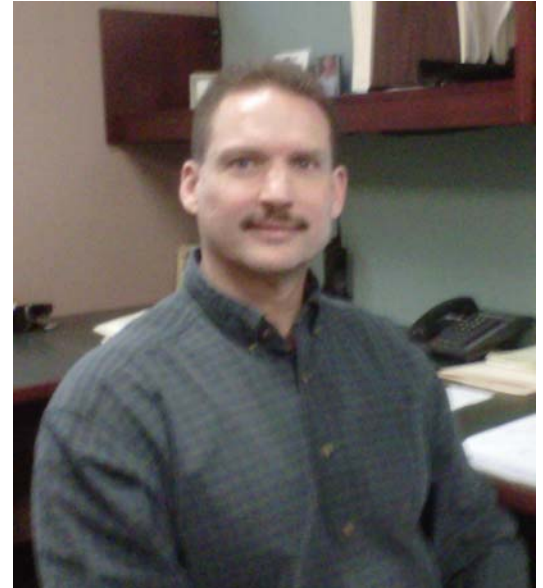
In 2000, Keith was nominated for the Baltimore Sun's "Police Officer of the Year" and the "State of Maryland's Law Enforcement Officer of

the Year."

For those who work with and know Keith, he demonstrates his sincere concern for citizens and his dedication to public service every day. On August 23, 2011, the Disabilities Commission was having its monthly meeting on the second floor of the County's office building. That afternoon a 5.8 earthquake violently shook the County. As many frightened people scrambled to get out of the building, Keith stayed behind and carried one of the Commission members, who is confined to a wheelchair, out of the building to safety.

When asked to describe Keith as an employee, his Supervisor, Joannie Coleman-Casey replied, "Keith's behavior during the earthquake is characteristic of his performance at work on a daily basis."

Outside of work, Keith enjoys spending time with his family and friends, traveling, and keeping physically active. He enjoys tennis and weight lifting.



This winter Keith will be active on the basketball court coaching the Severna Park Green Hornets 14-18 year old boys basketball team.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Buying a pre-constructed shed can be a convenient and cost-effective option for many homeowners. However, if the structure is greater than 64 square feet, County Code requires that a building permit be issued. Many homeowners mistakenly think that they don't need a permit if they don't actually build the shed themselves. Additionally, sheds greater than 400 square feet require a foundation. For more information on permitting please call 410-222-7700 or visit our website: <http://www.aacounty.org/IP/index.cfm>.



**NO PERMIT REQUIRED FOR 8 X 8 SHED**



**SHEDS LARGER THAN 8 X 8 (64 SQ FT) REQUIRE A BUILDING PERMIT AND POSSIBLY A FOUNDATION**

# THAT'S GRADING?

Loretta Gannon, Environmental Code Compliance Inspector

Not all **grading** projects require a permit. Where you plan to grade is a deciding factor in the need for a permit. The County can be divided into distinct classifications, each requiring different levels of environmental protection based on current State, Federal and County laws (select definitions from the Anne Arundel County Code are below).

Almost all projects located within the **Chesapeake Bay Critical Area buffer** and/or **expanded buffer** will require a permit or other form of approval. Visit the Department of Inspections and Permits website: <http://www.aacounty.org/IP/index.cfm> for assistance and contact information.

Projects located outside the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area buffer or expanded buffer, and still within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area or a **sensitive area** that disturb less than 5,000 square feet will typically not require a **grading permit**. However,

they may be subject to other requirements to meet storm water management and/or forestry regulations.

Proposed projects on properties outside the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area that disturb less than 5,000 square feet of area generally do not require a grading permit as long as steep slopes are not impacted.

All projects disturbing greater than 5,000 square feet of area anywhere in the County are subject to a grading permit, inclusive of provisions for storm water management.

When grading, even when a permit or other form of authorization is not required, homeowners are responsible for maintaining site conditions or **stabilizing** the site to prevent **erosion** from occurring and/or **sediment** from leaving the site.

County planners and inspectors are available to assist homeowners with proposed projects. In order to best serve citizens and save time, it is important to provide as much information about the project and its location as possible.

## DEFINITIONS

**"Grading"** means to cause the disturbance of the earth, and the term includes clearing, excavating, filling, including hydraulic fill, stockpiling of earth materials, grubbing, rootmat or top soil disturbance, or a combination of any of these operations, including logging and timber removal operations.

**"Grading permit"** means a permit issued to authorize grading to be performed.

**"Chesapeake Bay Critical Area"** means areas within 1,000 feet from tidal waters and tidal wetlands.

**"Buffer / Expanded Buffer"** are areas that are established by law to protect environmentally sensitive areas. In the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, the buffer is a minimum of 100' from tidal waters and tidal wetlands which are "expanded" due to the presence of contiguous steep slopes, hydric soils or highly erodible soils. Additionally, all non-tidal wetlands, including designated bog areas have buffers established in State and County law.

**"Erosion"** is the process whereby land surface is worn away by wind, water, ice, or gravity.

**"Sediment"** are soils transported by wind, water, ice, gravity, or by human actions.

**"Stabilizing/Stabilization"** means the prevention of soil movement by vegetative or structural means.

**"Sensitive Areas"** are environmentally sensitive areas requiring further review prior to any type of development activity, and in particular, "grading" as defined above. These areas include steep slopes, streams, tidal and non-tidal wetlands, hydric soils, bogs, and the buffers that surround these areas. Sensitive areas also include forest conservation areas, easements, historic sites, archaeological sites, and cemeteries.



*This picture shows what can happen when homeowners do not get the proper permits and approvals for grading work. This homeowner removed too much vegetation and did not properly stabilize the slope. Correcting this problem will end up costing more time and money than it would have to have done the work properly the first time. Additionally, runoff is polluting the waterway.*



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Send your request to: [treynolds@aacounty.org](mailto:treynolds@aacounty.org).



## Holiday Schedule

*The staff of the  
Department of  
Inspections and  
Permits wishes  
you a happy  
holiday season  
and a prosperous  
New Year!*

All Anne Arundel County Government offices will be closed on  
the following days:

Friday, December 23, 2011– Service Reduction Day

Monday, December 26, 2011– Christmas Holiday

Monday, January 2, 2012 - New Year Holiday

Monday, January 16, 2012 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**Please Note: Inspections will not be performed on these days.**

