



GUIDANCE FOR REMOTE VIDEO INSPECTION (RVI)

AS COMMUNITIES DEAL WITH the escalating impact of COVID-19, jurisdictions are determining how to continue critical building, life, and electrical safety functions while personnel are deployed elsewhere, buildings are closed, or access to buildings is limited to reduce virus spread. The National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) is offering guidance on remote video inspection (RVI), which could be an alternative to physical inspection. This information was adapted from Conducting Remote Video Inspections, a white paper developed by the Building Code Development Committee (BCDC) of NFPA. The BCDC was not a Technical Committee within the NFPA standards development process. The content, opinions, and conclusions in the report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the NFPA or any of its Technical Committees. With social distancing requirements now in place, this type of inspection may be able to accomplish critical and emergency permit work that is still underway.

A remote video inspection is an inspection of a building or building component that uses video technology to allow parties to be remote from each other while the inspection is being performed. These inspections are typically associated within a jurisdiction's permitting process and would need to be approved by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). It is important to note that RVI is not intended to be less complete than an on-site inspection. Rather, RVI should be employed to achieve the same (or enhanced) results as an on-site inspection.

For those interested in using RVI, it is recommended that the following minimum considerations be observed. While RVI could be considered for recorded video, photographs, or other media types, the considerations below are generally provided for live video use.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

As RVI is new to many, it is important to clarify and communicate four important items.

1. Identify the types of inspections that RVI can address. Not all inspections lend themselves well to a remote environment. Consider carefully the types you may choose to utilize.
2. Determine if it is safe to use RVI based on time of day/weather/job site/safety considerations. These important questions will need be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
3. Consider the administrative provisions for an RVI. How would an RVI request be made and received? Is there a special application? How will permit fees be addressed? What other administrative items need to be considered? Once finalized it is recommended that these provisions be made publicly available.
4. Establish what a successful RVI looks like. Crafting examples of successful RVIs will establish a benchmark for success.



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SELECTING TECHNOLOGY

Assess the types of technology to be used. Each technology generally offers useful features but also has specific requirements. The following two items should be considered to select the technology that best fits the RVI need.

1. Do all parties have internet connectivity via a cellular service, Wi-Fi, or other means? Is the source of connection adequate and stable? These important questions will need to be answered to select appropriate technologies as well as to safeguard against interference or dropped connections.
2. What types of technology should be used? There are many jurisdictions that currently use smartphone video software to provide RVI. These are commonly used formats, and their use is usually intuitive. Consideration should be given to an approved technology that all parties performing the RVI are comfortable using.



LOCATION VERIFICATION

Knowing where the inspection is to take place is important. Verification is recommended and should accurately demonstrate that the RVI is occurring at the correct location, including a specific location within a structure (for example, a second-floor storage room in a three-story structure). There are many ways to accomplish this, which will vary from project to project.

MY NAME IS _____

Consider who will be performing the RVI. Is it the general contractor for the overall structure? The subcontractor who installed the specific system? The building owner? Or an approved third party? Having all parties clearly identify themselves ahead of time can reduce confusion when the RVI is performed. Additionally, if more than one party is on site for the RVI, it may be beneficial for everyone to identify themselves when speaking.

“COULD YOU SHOW ME THAT OVER THERE...”

While performing the actual inspection, it is important to engage in dialogue. Similar to an on-site inspection, an RVI should allow all parties to communicate about what is being reviewed. Be sure to ask questions, provide information when requested, and review any possible areas of confusion. It could be helpful to have the contractor or appropriate subcontractor available to answer questions about the project.

It is imperative to have a steady hand while holding the RVI device and ensure there is proper lighting so that video can be seen clearly.

SIGNOFF/FOLLOW UP

Determine how the permit holder proceeds once the inspection has concluded. Ensuring that proper sign off/re-inspection instructions are clearly communicated is critical for all parties.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM NFPA

Click on the links below for more information on RVI.

- » White Paper—Conducting Remote Video Inspections
- » NFPA 915, Standard on Remote Inspections (proposed standard)
- » Guidance for Maintaining Fire Protection and Life Safety Systems Regardless of Occupancies
- » NFPA Information on COVID-19

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