Safety Codes Council

Orders and Variances Portal: Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Council changing how orders and variances are registered?

The change is intended to make registration more consistent across Alberta's safety codes system and to improve the quality and timeliness of the information available to the Safety Codes Council (the Council).

The Orders and Variances Portal (OVP) provides a standardized reporting process that will support compliance reviews, audits, and quality assurance; improve trend analysis and the identification of systemic issues; and support future code development and policy discussions. The overall objective is greater consistency, accountability, transparency, and confidence in Alberta's safety codes system.

> **Important:** Beginning Dec. 1, 2026, OVP will be the required method for registering orders and variances.

Read the bulletin: Orders and Variances Registration Changes

Do I have to use OVP, or can I continue emailing orders and variances to the Council?

You must use OVP. Beginning Dec. 1, 2026, OVP will be the sole acceptable method for registering orders and variances. Safety codes officers (SCOs) who issue orders and variances must use OVP to register them. The legacy email submission method will no longer be operational.

Accredited organizations remain responsible for ensuring that orders and variances issued on their behalf are properly registered.

Access OVP

New users should select "No account? Create one" when the login box appears. Users must register with their SCO email address as recorded in Council Connect.

Is uploading only the issued variance enough to complete a variance registration?

No. Beginning Dec. 1, 2026, supporting documentation must be included when a variance is registered in OVP. This includes the alternative solution, other documentation the SCO relied on when deciding whether to issue or refuse the variance, or both.

The Council has also introduced a revised Variance Form for Proposed Alternative Solutions. The revised form must be completed and included when the variance is registered. The form does not replace the supporting documentation the SCO used to assess whether the proposed alternative provides approximately equivalent or greater safety performance.

A variance submitted without the required supporting documentation is incomplete and will be returned to the SCO and the authority having jurisdiction for completion. If you do not have supporting documentation to include in the registration, you should not issue the variance. Doing so could affect your certification as an SCO.

Related resources

- Orders and Variances Registration Changes Information Bulletin
- Mandatory Documentation of Variances Information Bulletin
- Variance Form for Proposed Alternative Solutions

What supporting documentation needs to be submitted?

Submit the documentation the SCO relied on to determine that the proposed variance provides approximately equivalent or greater safety performance. You do not need to submit every document provided as part of the permit application.

For building, fire, and plumbing, alternative solutions must be documented in accordance with Division C of the applicable code.

For electrical, gas, and private sewage, documentation demonstrating equivalency is required by the applicable quality management plan or quality management system (QMP/QMS).

The requirement to have supporting documentation is not new. The Council previously clarified these expectations in the Mandatory Documentation of Variances Information Bulletin (IB-2025-11-18). What changes with OVP is that the supporting documentation must be included when the variance is registered.

Read the bulletin: Mandatory Documentation of Variances

Why does the Council need supporting documentation if the SCO has already made the decision?

A variance is a decision that an alternative approach provides approximately equivalent or greater safety performance than the prescriptive requirements that would otherwise apply. Effective oversight therefore requires an understanding of the evidence the SCO relied on in making that decision.

Having the supporting information available through OVP helps the Council with compliance oversight, audits, quality assurance, and its broader accreditation responsibilities.

Importantly, registration in OVP does not constitute Council approval of an order or variance, and it does not transfer responsibility for the decision from the individual authorized under the *Safety Codes Act* to issue it.

Read the bulletin: Orders and Variances Registration Changes

What should I do if I do not have supporting documentation?

You cannot issue or register the variance without documentation demonstrating equivalency.

Work with the applicant to ensure the appropriate documentation and administrative requirements have been satisfied before you issue the variance.

The documentation requirements depend on the discipline:

- **Building, fire, and plumbing:** Alternative solutions must be documented in accordance with Division C of the applicable code.
- **Electrical, gas, and private sewage:** Documentation demonstrating equivalency is required by the applicable QMP/QMS.

Supporting documentation is not simply an OVP administrative requirement. It provides the information needed to support the SCO's determination that the proposed variance provides the required level of equivalency.

If the documentation required to demonstrate equivalency is not available, the variance is not ready to be issued.

My organization's QMP or QMS says supporting documentation does not need to be submitted to the Council. Which requirement do I follow?

Beginning Dec. 1, 2026, follow the OVP requirements.

Some existing QMPs and QMSs contain language stating that only a copy of the variance must be registered and that supporting documentation is not required. This language reflects the historical registry process.

Effective Dec. 1, 2026, accredited organizations must comply with the OVP reporting requirements, regardless of whether their existing QMP or QMS contains this legacy language. The Council will update its QMP/QMS templates, and the revised language will be incorporated through future renewal, review, and approval processes.

Do not wait for your organization's QMP or QMS to be formally updated before following the OVP process.

When do I need to register an order or variance?

Beginning Dec. 1, 2026:

- Variances must be registered in OVP at the time of issuance or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.
- Orders must be registered in OVP before delivery to the owner, permit holder, contractor, or responsible party.

Where a variance relates to a multi-stage permit process, registration may occur simultaneously with, or before, issuance of the final building permit, provided that the variance decision has been made and the documentation used to reach the decision is available.

Access OVP

Who is responsible for ensuring an order or variance is registered, and where can I get help?

Only SCOs will have access to register orders and variances in OVP. However, accredited organizations and SCOs remain jointly responsible for ensuring that registrations are complete and accurate.

The Council has developed resources to help SCOs become familiar with OVP, including materials on creating an account and on creating variance and order requests.

Key resources and contacts

- Orders and Variances Portal
- Orders and Variances Registration Changes Information Bulletin
- Mandatory Documentation of Variances Information Bulletin
- OVP implementation questions: accreditation@safetycodes.ab.ca
- Questions about SCO responsibilities: certification@safetycodes.ab.ca

Will QMP/QMS managers be able to see the orders and variances registered for their jurisdiction?

Yes. This is a new feature of OVP. QMP/QMS managers and secondary contacts identified in Council Connect will be able to access orders and variances entered in OVP for their jurisdiction.

This feature was not available in the previous Orders and Variances System and was developed in response to requests from accredited organizations.

Providing this access will support:

- easier organizational auditing;
- improved record-keeping;
- better visibility of orders and variances issued within a jurisdiction; and
- the shared responsibility of SCOs and accredited organizations for ensuring that orders and variances are properly administered.

Login access for QMP/QMS managers and secondary contacts will be available before Dec. 1, 2026. The Council will formally notify them when this access is available and provide the information they need to log in.

In the meantime, QMP/QMS managers and secondary contacts should make sure their contact information in Council Connect is current.

Proper administration is a shared responsibility. SCOs are responsible for exercising their authority appropriately and registering their orders and variances through OVP. Accredited organizations also have responsibilities for the administration and oversight of their accredited safety codes services.

The goal is not simply to collect information in OVP. It is to make that information more useful to both the Council and accredited organizations in supporting the effective administration of Alberta's safety codes system.

Does registering a variance in OVP mean that the Council has approved the variance?

No. Registration of a variance in OVP does not constitute approval of the variance by the Council.

Responsibility for reviewing the proposed variance, evaluating the supporting information, and determining whether the requirements for issuing the variance have been satisfied remains with the SCO exercising that authority.

The Council will regularly audit variance registrations for administrative compliance. Variance registrations that are incomplete, lack the documentation necessary to demonstrate equivalency, or are

otherwise administratively non-compliant with the applicable legislation or regulation may be returned for correction.

As previously communicated in the Council's Mandatory Documentation of Variances Information Bulletin, all variances issued by SCOs are subject to the requirements of the regulations governing the applicable discipline. The bulletin also reminds accredited organizations and SCOs of their responsibilities to properly document variances and maintain required records.

The bulletin further confirms that the Council and the Administrator of Accreditation will continue to monitor compliance through audits and investigations. Accredited organizations and SCOs are expected to ensure that variances are properly documented and submitted, maintain records in accordance with their approved QMP/QMS, and co-operate with requests for documentation and compliance reviews.

Registering a variance does not correct an incomplete, unsupported, or administratively non-compliant variance. Registering administratively incomplete or incorrect variances may lead to certification or accreditation action by the Council, as applicable. The bulletin notes that non-compliance may result in enforcement action, including suspension or cancellation of accreditation or designation.

SCOs and accredited organizations should review the Mandatory Documentation of Variances Information Bulletin and ensure their processes meet the applicable requirements.

What privacy requirements apply when administering orders and variances?

While there may be aspects of your work that fall outside your obligations under the *Safety Codes Act*, any work done under the *Safety Codes Act*, including exercising any powers or fulfilling any obligations, is subject to Alberta privacy legislation.

Whether you work directly for a public body or for a private agency contracted by a public body, you are expected and required to follow the *Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*.

As part of meeting obligations under these acts, employees are expected to complete the training provided by the Government of Alberta. This course is free of charge and is important in ensuring that obligations under this legislation are understood and met.

Take the Protection of Privacy Act for Public Bodies training

The Council will also add privacy language to its variance form template.

When submitting information and supporting documentation through OVP, SCOs should ensure that the information provided is appropriate to the administration of the order or variance and avoid including unnecessary personal information.

Privacy obligations are part of properly administering safety codes services and apply to information collected, used, and disclosed while carrying out that work.