

This message is being sent to all District and DEP management. Please provide to your staff.

There have been many questions asked regarding processing of Chapter 102 permit applications during the unprecedented social distancing due to COVID -19. This email covers a number of topics of interest.

Electronic Receipt and Signatures

If a District is able, you may still accept paper submissions (applications/NOIs, responses to deficiency letters, etc.) through the mail. However, you may also accept submissions through appropriate electronic means. For documents which require an actual signature (i.e., the NOI or application, the GIF for individual permits, the Modules, etc.) we can accept electronic signatures as follows:

- A typed name on the signature line, or
- A photocopy of a wet signature on the signature line.

Please be sure to save the electronic copy of the communication that transmitted the document to you.

Fees

For any fees that are to be paid, the District should still try to deposit the checks in accordance with guidance and forward the disturbed acreage fee to the DEP office. If the District is not able to deposit the fee(s) or forward the check to the DEP office, the District can hold the fees and the completeness review can proceed, assuming the proper fees were submitted. After social distancing is over, all fees should be deposited and forwarded as soon as possible.

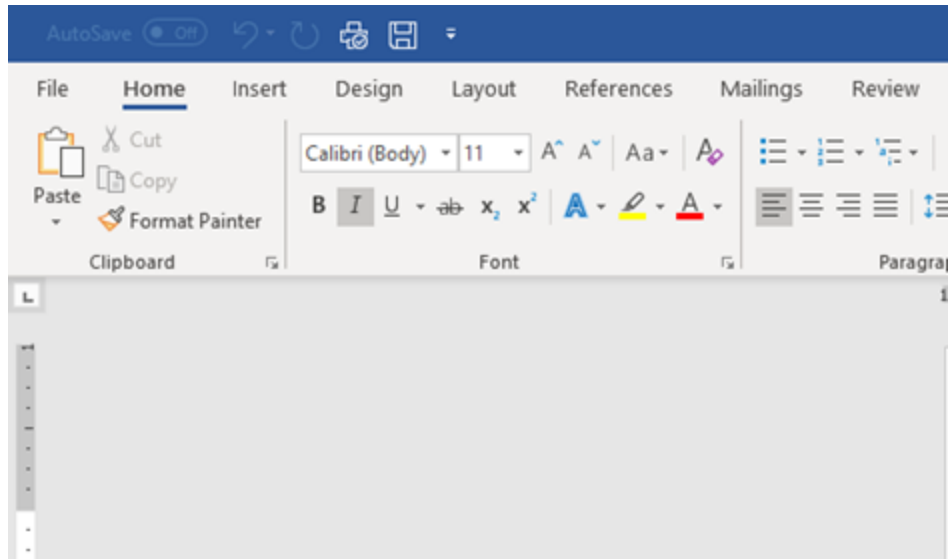
Correspondence with Applicants

For letters (incomplete notification, technical deficiency, etc.) that need to be sent to applicants – if the District has the ability to prepare and send paper letters, that process should still be followed. If not (and you have not received other direction from your legal counsel), the District can still prepare the letter in Word as normal, with the following additional procedures:

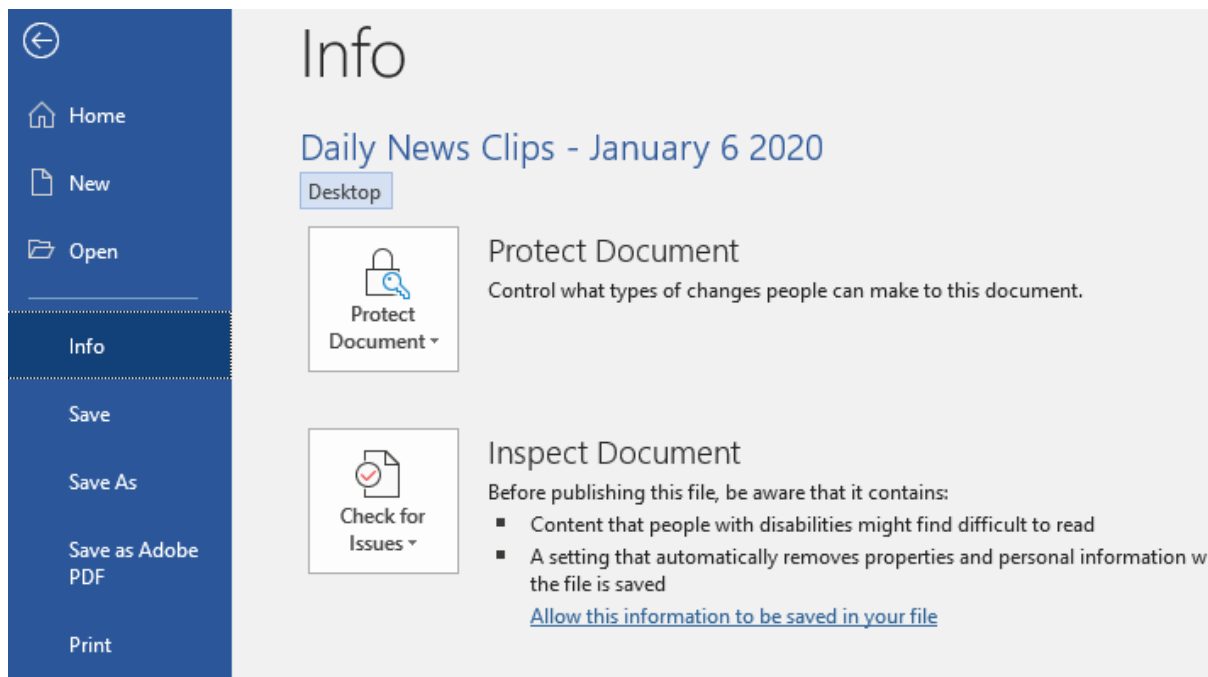
- Type in your or your manager's name on the signature line (font does not matter).
- Save the electronically signed document and a copy of the email transmitting the document.
- Keep track of the documents that you have issued in this manner, so as to have a record of them to confirm authenticity if ever questioned.
- Do not add the "/s/" when typing your name as a signature.
- Send the final document as a PDF (not a Word document). However, you must be sure to remove the metadata from the Word document before saving the PDF. To remove the metadata, follow these steps:

1) Save your document first, any changes made by the metadata scrub can only be undone by reopening the document without saving it after the scrub

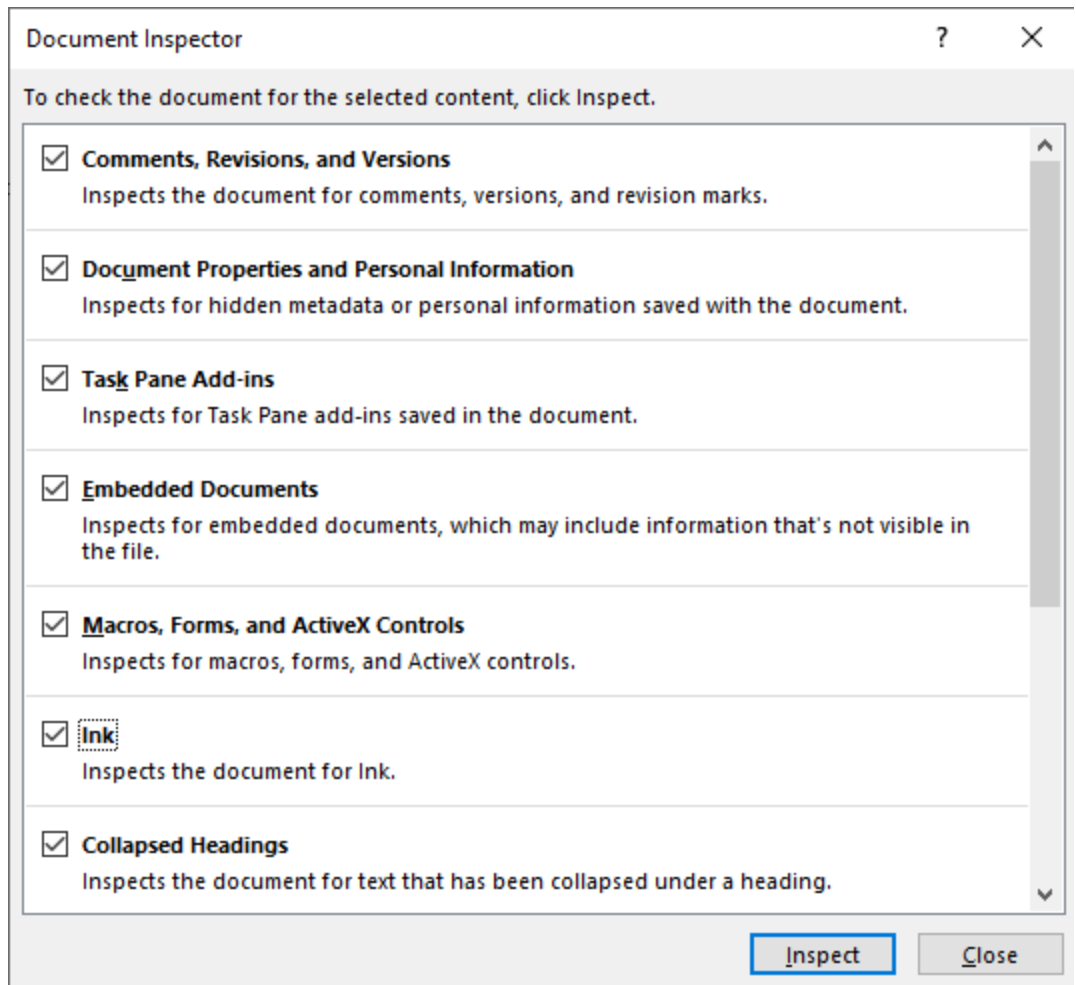
2) Click on File in the upper left-hand corner of Microsoft Word



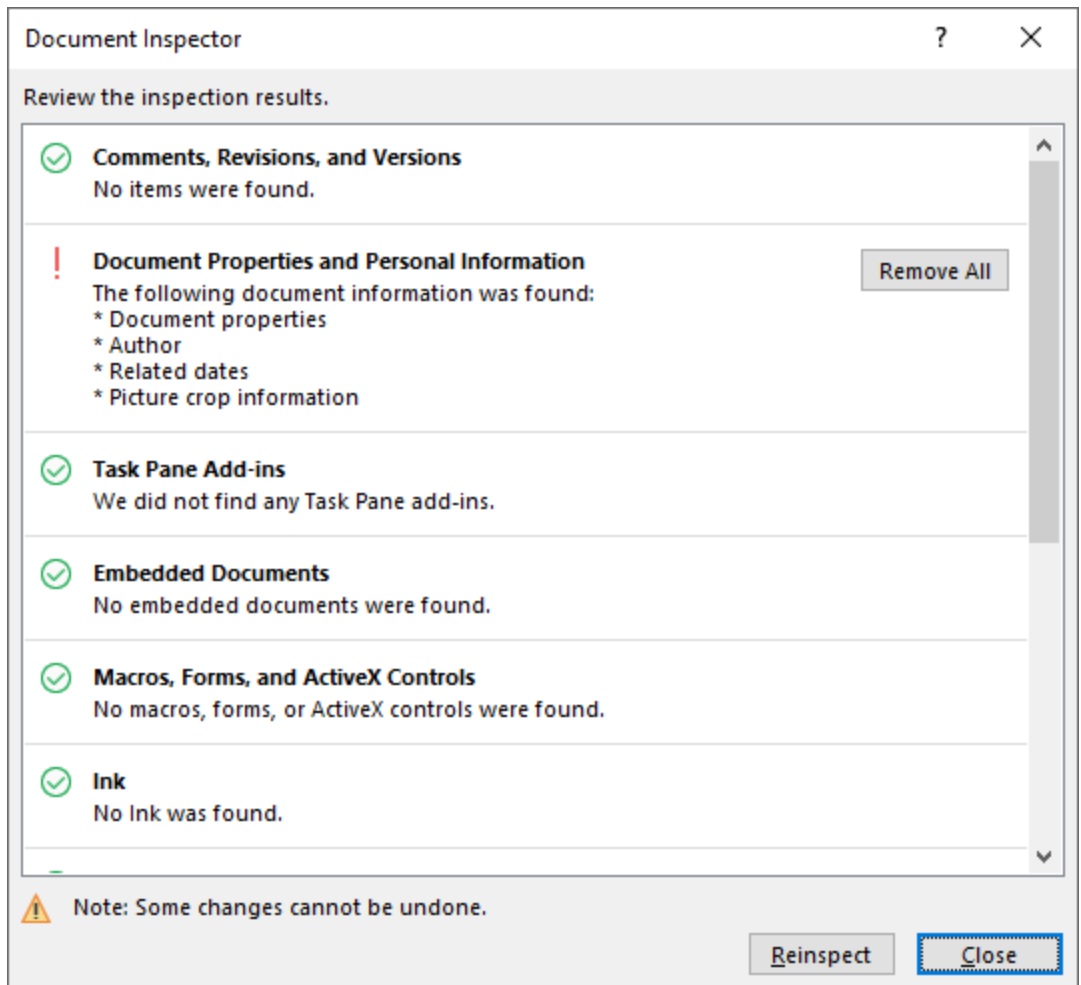
3) In the Info menu, click on the Inspect Document tile

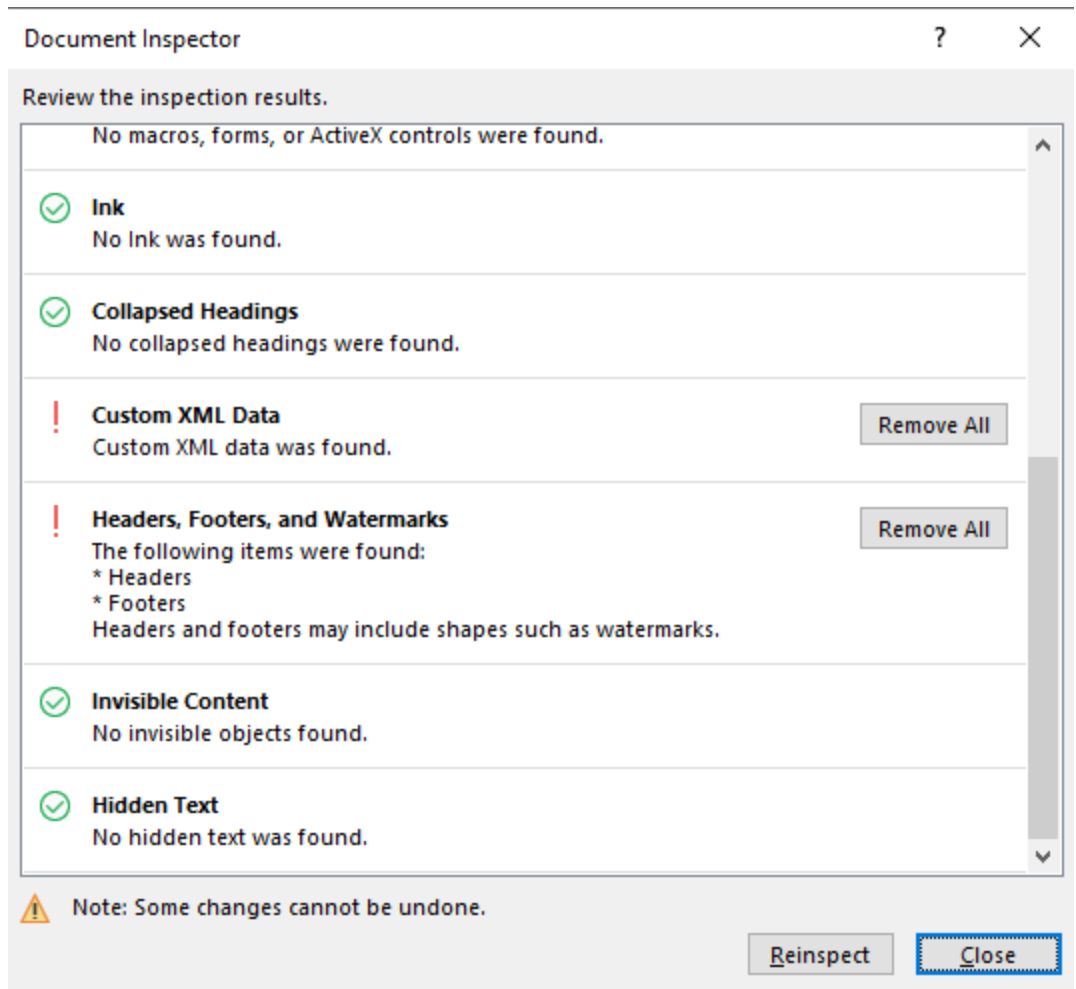


4) In the Document Inspector menu, make sure all boxes are checked and click Inspect

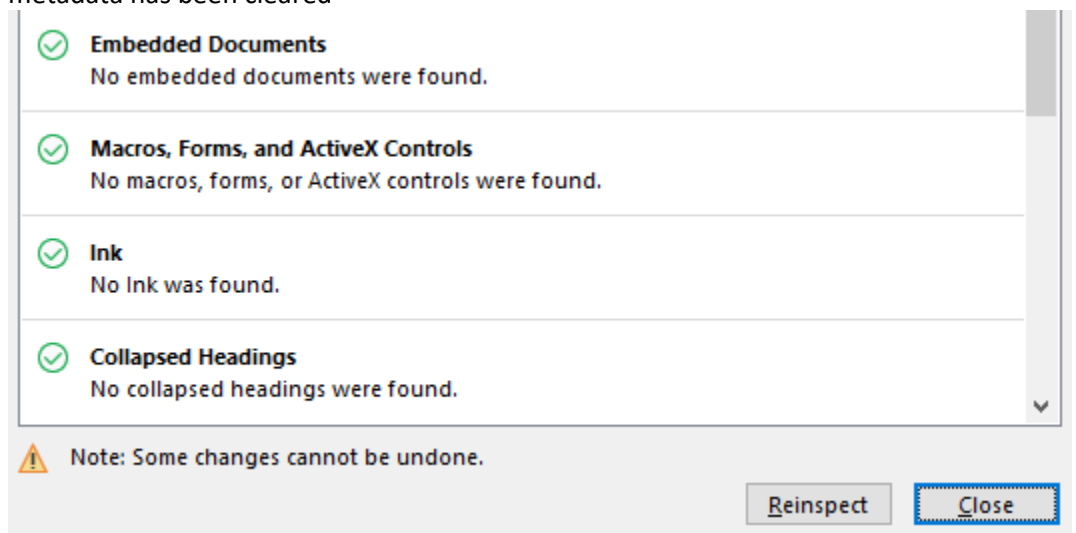


5) Click Remove All for items that come up with a red exclamation mark as shown. You may have to scroll down for additional items. If your document needs headers or footers, please ignore that section.





6) Click Reinspect and repeat the process once more to ensure all required metadata has been cleared



7) Click Close.

8) Save the document as a PDF.

Issuing Permits

If you are taking a final action on a permit, you can follow the same directions as above to sign or digitally sign the document. If you are authorizing or issuing a permit, the final cover letter will reference the approved plans. If you have a paper copy of the plans, please follow standard procedures when approving the permit concerning transmittal of stamped plans. If you do not have a paper copy of plans available to send to the permittee, you can identify to them (in your email that transmits the permit) that a stamped copy of the plans will be provided after the permittee provides a paper copy to the District, upon the end of social distancing. Additionally, any required attachments (NOT, Visual Site Inspection Report, etc.) to permit authorizations/issuances can be provided by attaching the actual PDFs or links to the PDFs (obtained through eLibrary) in the email correspondence.

Extension Requests

If a time extension request for responding to an incompleteness letter or technical deficiency letter is submitted during social distancing, where the applicant or consultant cites an office closure as the reason for the extension, it may be granted (even if the extension would exceed recommended times identified in the SOPs). However, the District should continue to coordinate any time extensions with their DEP office. The time extensions granted may not be open ended; however, during the time of social distancing we will consider granting multiple time extensions as appropriate.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please do not hesitate to contact your DEP office for additional guidance.