

Lacey Lively:

Good morning. This morning I am with Code Enforcement Supervisor, Tommy Shilling.

Tommy Shilling:

Hello.

Lacey Lively:

How are you doing?

Tommy Shilling:

I'm doing great.

Lacey Lively:

Good. I know with the students back, with A&M starting, y'all are very busy. And so I definitely wanted to bring you in during this time to talk about all things code enforcement. This is for everybody to hear and learn.

Tommy Shilling:

Okay. Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am.

Lacey Lively:

So let's start it off. What are the frequent problems that you're seeing right now, that you hope people would understand? Like, "Hey, that's a code violation." And/or if you're a neighbor of some young students that don't know our codes, what should they do?

Tommy Shilling:

The common violations that we're seeing since school did start, and move in was last week, we're seeing a heavy influx of accumulation of trash. And we ask the public to be kind of mindful. Our sanitation department's kind of being hit hard. Especially move in, move out. So kind of be mindful of that. Kind of understand the situations. They have a hard task at hand. The best way for us to do that, is an educational push. We have sent out educational flyers, and we've done walk and talks with apartments, residential neighborhoods. We've targeted certain areas where there is a heavy influx. And then we'll go out, do walk and talks, calls, phone calls, every... We're trying to get this information out.

Lacey Lively:

Well. And that's another thing I want to make sure to know that we are not picking on students. I am not picking on students, because I remember when I moved here, I had no idea how to deal with my trash. Because I came from Beaumont, and the swamp lands where, I mean honestly, where that was taken care of for me. So that's not one of the things that, when you are going off to a new town and starting school, that's not part of the education process, is how do you live in a neighborhood? What are the rules? They just don't know. So that's another thing. I know our neighborhood services, and public communications, and code, and solid waste. We all try to educate. Like, if you're a permanent resident here, and you know you have new neighbors, go meet them, go talk to them. We also have welcome

bags that you can give them that has our solid waste and recycling guide as well. The more education... Because they honestly don't know. They're not doing it to trash our city. They just don't know.

Tommy Shilling:

Right. Most of the students that come in here, they're 18 to 19 years old, and they're used to a certain way. Well you're now on your own, and they just don't understand what the city provides to them.

Lacey Lively:

Right.

Tommy Shilling:

And that's kind of what we've learned a lot with code enforcement. We make those educational calls, Hey, how to become a better neighbor. Park the right way on the street. Don't block your neighbors parking, the driveway, or don't accumulate trash, don't have open storage. So that educational push is really big. Because a lot of people, like you said, they move from different areas.

Lacey Lively:

Right.

Tommy Shilling:

There's... Different towns have different ordinances, of course, and different rules. So it's very important for them to understand how to be a better neighbor in College Station.

Lacey Lively:

And so if you're curious about codes that the city of College Station has, you can go to cstx.gov/codeenforcement. And that lists all of the actual codes as well as the frequently violated, which you mentioned open storage. What is that?

Tommy Shilling:

So open storage is anything that is openly stored from the public right of way. What we run into, is people, they put couches in their front yard, or cabinetries, and stuff like that. The rule of thumb is, anything indoors need to be indoors.

Lacey Lively:

Right.

Tommy Shilling:

Like an outdoor couch. A patio couch is generally the way to go.

Lacey Lively:

Okay. And so you also mentioned parking, because I know when I was a student here, I got a lot of parking tickets. This is not just a college town. You need to understand. Especially during football season, that's coming up, and the neighborhoods around Kyle Field, it's hard to find parking. You still

need to abide by the laws, the rules there, because also a lot of these parking are state laws. It's not just College Station. So that's what parking blocking... Oh my gosh, crosswalks. I blanked.

Tommy Shilling:

Crosswalks, fire hydrants. What we're really running into is, especially in close to campus, is prohibited parking. Please pay attention to the signage. If it says, no, you cannot, no parking anytime, tow away zone, that's exactly what it means. It's not this side or that side. So I just pay attention to the signage. You can't be within 15 feet of a fire hydrant. That's actually, that's a real big one right now, because especially in the South Side district, there's so many fire hydrants, that a lot of people think that it's supposed to be painted red. So that's actually a fire lane. So if they had to do that fire lane in one area, they'd have to do it throughout the city and that's just not payable.

Lacey Lively:

Oh, okay.

Tommy Shilling:

So pay attention to fire hydrants, pay attention to signage. And the really big one is facing traffic. The good rule of thumb is your steering wheel should never be against the curb.

Lacey Lively:

Okay.

Tommy Shilling:

And that's what I explain to the residents when we make the phone calls.

Lacey Lively:

And I mean that is a safety issue. So whenever you're ready to leave that parking spot, you should be going with the flow of traffic and not have to cause a problem. The other one, especially with, I mean, we've had some rain, but with the drought, don't park in the grass in College Station.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes, yes. So that is a very big one. We're actually working on a flyer to kind of educate the parking on the grass. Because especially with the drought, grass fires have been really big here, and we try and get that education out there. We start by warnings, whenever we see one. The code officers and there certain areas will drive their area. And if there is a vehicle that's parked in the grass, they'll start with a warning, because a lot of people don't understand, even though that is a state law, it depends on what city actually, does or does not.

Lacey Lively:

Right.

Tommy Shilling:

So we do heavy education first, but with the drought, we've kind of been in that more enforcement stage than actually warning, because it's an immediate health and safety risk.

Lacey Lively:

Because it could start a fire.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes, ma'am.

Lacey Lively:

It will start a fire with our dry grass.

Tommy Shilling:

Yep, grass to house, and quite aggressive.

Lacey Lively:

Exactly, yes. Especially in our neighborhoods. And if, again, I wanted to throw out, so I have another URL... I'm full of URLs on this show, but cstx.gov/newresident has literally everything that we're talking about today, and more, and where you can order welcome bags. But we also have all of our code enforcement. We have flyers that we mentioned, that we can get out there. So definitely go there if you're new into town, or if you're like, "Man, I've lived here for a while and I didn't know about some of these rules." Still go there, cstx.gov/newresident. We are also working on a solid waste and recycling guide. So hopefully households will get that September, October-ish. So that'll all go out. Because if some are wondering like, "Well, what else are you doing for all the new people in town?" We will have that.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes.

Lacey Lively:

But well, do you have anything else you'd like to add for folks?

Tommy Shilling:

Yeah, not just with the city's website. We also have a social media website called SeeClickFix.

Lacey Lively:

Yes.

Tommy Shilling:

Whenever somebody, if you're in a certain area, or your neighbors, or however it goes, you notice that it could be a potential code violation. Take pictures and put it through there. It's a social media website, and the code officer for that area will receive that complaint, and we will visit that address, or wherever the complaint may be. If it's deemed a violation, we'll actually do a comment back to that person. Kind of keep them, where they're not being led on. We actually go, it's always every day, we'll actually do the comments and let them know, "Hey, this is not a violation." Or, "This is a violation." So that's a great website, or a great social media site, for the residents of College Station as well.

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Lacey Lively:

Is it an app too? Can you download the app?

Tommy Shilling:

Yes.

Lacey Lively:

So it's an app, or you can go to the online portal.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes ma'am.

Lacey Lively:

And then type in, do your stuff, and it's GIS too, right?

Tommy Shilling:

Yes it is.

Lacey Lively:

Okay.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes, it is. It is linked. It is. Just be careful if you're in a certain area, it might GIS link you to where you're at. So to help us out, be as accurate as you can.

Lacey Lively:

That's good advice.

Tommy Shilling:

If you don't know an actual number of the house, kind of get us in that vicinity, because unfortunately all these houses do look the same.

Lacey Lively:

Sure.

Tommy Shilling:

And then if they don't have the numbers, it's kind of hard to pinpoint. So usually we'll have to ask them, "Hey, can you give us an exact address?" But if we can push that out now, it makes our job a lot easier and we're not lost, or trying to find that actual address.

Lacey Lively:

Can you also search on there? If I'm like, "Oh, I need to turn something in." Can I go see if someone else has done it?

Tommy Shilling:

Yes.

Lacey Lively:

You can see that too. Okay.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. Yes.

Lacey Lively:

Perfect.

Tommy Shilling:

You can... There's... The SeeClickFix app is... It's amazing. You can actually pinpoint where most of the calls or the complaints have come in through that GIS portal. It's amazing.

Lacey Lively:

So you see what areas you really need to do walk and talks, and things like that.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes.

Lacey Lively:

That is good. So yes, we have thrown out a lot of information to you, but [cctx.gov](#) and you can search for anything, if you don't remember any of our URLs. And be sure to follow us on social media as well. Whenever we have stuff going on, and blogs and different things like that, we post that. Also, I know you talk about one of the other things coming up in October will be the household hazardous waste.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes.

Lacey Lively:

And that's a big thing. We always see trash. Move in, move out is a ton of trash everywhere. And so can you talk a little bit about that?

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. The good thing about what the city provides as well. If you pay for utilities, and it is in your name, you can actually go to the Twin Oaks Landfill, and provide them with that utilities bill, and you can dump your extra trash into there.

Lacey Lively:

Okay.

Tommy Shilling:

Also you can actually call for... What we've learned is, with these target areas, where they have four people in that address, they're kind of accumulating a lot more trash, and they only have one trash can. So they can call sanitation and get an extra trash can. So that would kind of deviate that accumulation from happening. And then another thing that we're running into is the trash cans being left out after the collection. And a lot of people don't understand that kind of messes up the neighborhood. Nobody wants to see that trashcan's at the street. It has to be brought up to the house.

Lacey Lively:

Right.

Tommy Shilling:

But a lot of people don't understand, like you said, when they move into College Station, the ordinances or rules. So what can do is the College Station Curbside app. It tells you trashcan days, collections, your bulk, your recycle can. And actually you can actually set it up where it sends you a reminder. That, trust me, I live in Castle Gate, and I have the app because sometimes I'm like, "Oh wait, I've got to go put out my trash". So it's a great venue for the people here.

Lacey Lively:

That is a great plug. It is a free app, College Station Curbside. And for those that don't know, you literally, you have a trash can day. Like, say you have a recycle can day, if you live in single family, and then you have a brush and bulky, where you can go and put your stuff out. And there's special collection days for that. You can get reminders on the app. The other thing I've seen driving around town, is people don't understand. There's not always someone physically getting out of the truck and picking up your stuff. The trucks have arms. I mean, we've got to get through all these households. The trucks have arms. So make sure when you put your stuff out, your can, or the brush and bulky, that it's not by a fixed... A parked car, a tree limb, or mailboxes.

Tommy Shilling:

Mailboxes.

Lacey Lively:

because the truck can't pick it up. So Don't pile bags of trash around your trash can, or the truck can't pick it up.

Tommy Shilling:

Right.

Lacey Lively:

So little things like that. If you're like, "Why didn't my stuff get picked up? And I put it out at the right time." It might have been a problem like that, as well.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. Yes. Correct. Yes. We've kind of started running into that problem as well. Because they only have the one can, and they're starting to kind of pancake that trash can up, or put those bags around the cans. And like you said, the trash truck, it's not the old school way of jumping out, grabbing trash, throwing in the trash truck. They literally, they service from night day, and they don't have time to get out there. Literally it's a grab truck, throw it, and they go on the next can. Also a good rule of thumb is they like the cans being more than four foot away.

Lacey Lively:

Yes.

Tommy Shilling:

And that way, it gives them enough footage to actually get in there and pick those up.

Lacey Lively:

These are all fun facts. So fun facts. And that's the other thing, if you know you're moving, if you know you're going to move, kind of consider what you're not taking. If you have good stuff that you can donate, we have a ton of non-profit organizations in town where you can donate stuff. Or said like, "Okay, I can't just all throw it at the curb." Go to the landfill, and take care of it that way. And then if you're going to have a lot, maybe proactively call solid waste and be like, "Hey, I need an extra collection." Or, "I need an extra can for that." So do just a little extra planning if you know you're moving out, and you're going to have a lot of stuff. Just to help out staff, and your neighbors.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Just kind of what we push is, just be better neighbors.

Lacey Lively:

See, and exact... I mean, again, because you could be living by a retired couple, a young professional needs to get up in all hours, and have been here forever. So we love our students. We love our new residents, but we just want to help you.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. We want to help you be better neighbors.

Lacey Lively:

Yes.

Tommy Shilling:

And not just with the websites, they could actually call code enforcement.

Lacey Lively:

Oh yes.

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Tommy Shilling:

979-764-6363. Usually most of our code officers are out in the field, but I, being the supervisor, I do stay in the office. But we would love to push out that education to them. And it's a simple yes or no.

Lacey Lively:

Just ask.

Tommy Shilling:

Call us, and we can educate you. And that's... There's sometimes where we do target areas, and we call people, and there's some that we don't. So if you ever have any questions, please call us, email us. We would love to get this information out.

Lacey Lively:

Yeah. Y'all have an easy email it's codeenforcement@cstx.gov. Is that right?

Tommy Shilling:

Yep.

Lacey Lively:

Okay.

Tommy Shilling:

Yep.

Lacey Lively:

Good. Yes. So there's all the ways that you can find more information or ask questions. And with that, thank you so much for stopping in, and giving us all the code enforcement information.

Tommy Shilling:

Yes. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Lacey Lively:

Thanks.

Lacey Lively:

And with that, that's Stuff You Don't Usually See.