

## **AMERICAN CANADIAN GRAND LODGE, AF&AM**

### **DISTRICT MASTERS' INSPECTION GUIDE**

(originally issued in January 1970 - revised and reissued in June 1982)

The basic responsibilities and duties of a District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) are outlined in Section 1.34 of The Code. The intent of this Inspection Guide is to clarify and amplify certain of those responsibilities to all Lodge officers concerned, that visitations of DDGMs might proceed smoothly and effectively. Appointed personally by the Grand Master (GM), the DDGM is in possession of a Warrant attesting to his appointment, a document which may be seen by any member desiring to exercise such privilege during an official visit of the DDGM. As the direct liaison between Masters of Lodges and the GM, the DDGM is available to answer inquiries concerning policy. As an example, if the GM's policy with respect to issuance of a desired Dispensation is unknown, the Master of the Lodge can turn to the DDGM who may be able to provide the answer, possibly eliminating avoidable correspondence or Lodge action. If the DDGM is uncertain as to policy in respect of a particular instance, he is in a position to obtain such decision direct from the GM, thereafter transmitting the information to the Lodge. The same applies to any and all problems which might arise within the Lodge or the District.

It should, however, be borne in mind that a DDGM is not empowered to arbitrarily render decisions when the GM's policy is not known. The District Deputy Grand Master may not render a decision which would tend to compromise or usurp the GM's authority, and has been chosen for his knowledge and ability to exercise discretion in carrying out his duties. The DDGM is not a substitute for the GM, but acts for and on behalf of the GM, and in doing so he is directly responsible to the GM in respect of all his Masonic actions and activities while serving in that capacity.

The DDGM should be included on the Lodge mailing list to ensure he is kept abreast of all Lodge events, and he should be contacted by the Master or Secretary when advice is desired. Routine administration actions need not normally be coordinated with the DDGM, as such matters are normally handled direct with the Grand Secretary. However, during official inspections he is required to make inquiry into all facets of Lodge operation and effect spot checks of various procedures to ensure the laws of this jurisdiction are being properly applied. On other occasions, (also see paragraph 7 of Code Section 1.34) the Grand Secretary may require specific attention by the DDGM to some administrative matters, and DDGMs are made aware of specific areas requiring their on-the-spot attention, by carbon copies of pertinent correspondence, memos, etc.

Generally speaking, the District Deputy Grand Master and the Grand Secretary should be sent a copy of any lodge correspondence that may eventually require the Grand Master's decision, such as a request for dispensation. When the DDGM is unavailable for comment, or when the Grand Master cannot be contacted, the Grand Secretary is available for response respecting the GM's views. However, no Grand Lodge officer other than the GM may temporarily

waive any Code or Lodge bylaw provision, or render an official interpretation or statement on behalf of the Grand Master without his prior consent.

Official Inspection visits must be previously arranged at least one week in advance, except in such instances when the DDGM has received specific instructions from the GM, in which instance the DDGM may appear on short notice, or, if unable to contact the Master or Secretary of the Lodge, with no notice at all. The DDGM should be received as the personal emissary of the GM. Very often the DDGM will want to be present during the opening of the Lodge, especially if he has not visited frequently, as he will want to witness the opening ceremonies. The procedure for receiving and welcoming the District Deputy Grand Master on his official inspection visitations will be found in this Handbook under the heading 'Receiving the District Deputy Grand Master'.

On official Inspection visits, the DDGM is entitled to a seat to the right of the Master, with precedence given only to one of the current elected officers of the Grand Lodge, or the GM or DGM of the VGL. After dispensing with required items of business, the Master should again present the gavel to the DDGM prior to closing, for any observations he may care to make. On all official visits, either before or after the business has been attended to, the DDGM will convey the greetings of the Grand Master, and address the Lodge on any of a number of topics for the good of the order, and may even comment on his observations during the inspection.

When attending a Lodge on other than an official Inspection visit, the DDGM should be received as befits the reception of all distinguished guests. If he is currently Master of his own Lodge, he should first be introduced as such and, then be recognized as the DDGM for the District.

In connection with official Inspection visits, the DDGM is empowered to review any and all Items of Lodge property deemed necessary to accomplish his duties and responsibilities. This may be done either before, during, or after the official visitation within the Lodge itself. The purpose of his inspection of Lodge properties and records is to determine if guidance is necessary and to ensure compliance with any applicable laws of this jurisdiction is being effected. His functions are purely fraternal and he is there to guide and assist to the best of his ability. Should he discover flagrant violation of our laws, disrespect of proper Masonic authority, or general negligence with respect to Lodge administration or the provisions of The Code, he is required to admonish those concerned, and render a written report of the situation, and his actions, directly to the GM.

As a general guide, the following lists some of the more important items a DDGM should check in connection with his official duties. When inspection indicates a need for further inquiry or review, the DDGM should ensure that follow-up action is undertaken as necessary.

- 1- Minutes, to ensure that minimum requirements outlined in The Code are included in the Lodge's official Minutes and are properly maintained.
- 2- Petitions, to ensure that proper procedures and/or necessary waivers are being effected, as well as to determine if petitions are properly completed, accepted, processed, and filed.
- 3- Dispensations, if any, to determine if utilized in accord with their terms

- 4- Financial records of the Secretary and Treasurer, to ensure that an Lodge finances are being properly administered, and audits properly completed.
- 5- ACGL published releases to all Lodges, to ensure these are being properly maintained and filed, as well as to determine if the required reference files of Communicators, Bulletins, etc., are being maintained and are up-to-date.
- 6- Attendance registers, to determine Lodge attendance and to ascertain Brethren are recording their attendance as required by The Code.
- 7- Examining Committee effectiveness, to determine if visitors are being properly examined.
- 8- Dues cards and stubs, to determine compliance with required procedures (should be cross-checked with Secretary's financial records).
- 9- Suspensions of members for non-payment of dues, to ensure such actions comply with requirements of The Code and the Lodge Bylaws.
- 10-10-Ritual work, to determine if Lodge Officers have qualified themselves and are performing their duties as required.
- 11-11-Elections and Installations, to ensure these are conducted properly in accordance with the laws of this jurisdiction.
- 12-ACGL/Lodge correspondence, including discrepancy memorandums, to ensure that proper and timely attention is being given to requests for information, etc.
- 13-Courtesy work files, to ensure proper processing of such requests and that necessary correspondence and follow-up action is undertaken.
- 14-Monthly report files, to ensure these are maintained adequately, enabling ease of research into all Lodge membership actions.
- 15-Forms, to ensure the Lodge is utilizing only authorized ACGL forms when and where specified (coordinate with Secretary's Handbook).
- 16-Lodge physical property (in addition to those items required by The Code) to determine general condition of the Lodge.

Especial attention must be given by the DDGM to those specific areas where the particular Lodge may be weak. Some Lodges require much more assistance than others, due to lack of depth and experience. When he can allocate the necessary time, each of the above, and other areas of Lodge operation, should be explored in depth by the District Deputy Grand Master.

District Deputy Grand Masters are required to submit written reports (Para. 6, Section 1.34) in sufficient time to allow the GM to review their contents well in advance of the Annual Communication of the ACGL. These reports will generally be of a narrative type, and will include general and specific impressions the DDGM received during his inspection and during other visits or discussions. On occasion the Grand Master may request District Deputy Grand Masters to survey specific areas, and to include in his report to the Grand Master specific data on charitable programs, investments, community relations, conduct of collations, frequency and type of social events scheduled, etc. A copy of his report may, at his option, be sent to the Lodge, although not required. His report may be completely confidential to the GM. Under any circumstance, it is a report to the Grand Master, and should be candid, concise, and address all problem areas, if

the report is to serve its primary purpose of adequately informing the Grand Master with factual information.

It should be understood these necessary inspection procedures help ensure that a suitably high standard of Masonic administration and work is being maintained in accord with our laws; these are equivalent to procedures used by most well established Grand Jurisdictions,

and is perhaps the most important mission of any Grand Lodge.

A proper attention to Masonic procedure, rather than blind dependence upon intuition or erroneous information, will accrue to the benefit and wellbeing of each constituent Lodge, and help prevent little concerns from developing into major problem areas.

One final word; although hardly conceivable a District Deputy Grand Master would abuse his authority, should such unfortunate circumstance occur, direct recourse to the GM is always available and is a legitimate right of each member and constituent Lodge. Our primary commitment to Freemasonry demands that the essential harmony, which must prevail if our labors are to be rewarded, and the Fraternity flourish, must be constantly cultivated. The support and assistance given to your District Deputy Grand Master will help him to better serve the lodges in his District and the Grand Lodge, and will assist in the never-ending task of preserving and improving those ideals and standards which have stood the test of time and provide evidence of the best in Masonry.

### **Some Recommended Topics for District Deputy Grand Masters meetings/Workshops**

District Meetings should serve the purpose of inter-communication among the officers and members of the Lodges in the District. Some suggested topics for a District Meeting program are noted below:

1. Ritual Work - specific and general.
2. Masonic Jurisprudence.
3. Discussion of the 'Masonic family' of concordant and appendant bodies and their relationship to, and effect upon, each other.
4. Importance of regular correspondence with membership.
5. Decentralization (decision-making; planning and problem solving at Lodge level first followed by the District.).
6. Discussion of membership retention, with special emphasis on such basics as the difference between a 'Certificate of Good Standing' and a 'Demit'. Many members are unaware of the differences, and we may be losing members who might otherwise retain membership if they were better informed as to the possibilities for dual and plural membership. Lodge officers must be aware of these regulations.
7. Masonic conduct and decorum by members and visitors.
8. Ancient Landmarks.
9. Constitution, Grand Lodge Code and Lodge Bylaws.
10. Lodge administration (with stress on a check and balance system to avoid the problems which arise when a lodge officer is negligent and/ or careless in carrying out his responsibilities.)

11. Community involvement (need for; how to; discretion, etc.)
12. Support of Grand Lodge projects, with emphasis on the PMR Charity Fund.