



Benefits of Building Permits

By reading this handout you have already taken the first step toward protecting the outcome and investment value of your construction project and guarding against a possible lawsuit or injury. The following information describes simple steps you can take to obtain a building permit and how permits can work for you. You will be surprised at how easy the process is.

The truth is building permits are very beneficial to you and your community. By working with an expert code official you will benefit from their knowledge of the building codes to ensure your construction project is built right, will be safe, and will last. Read on to discover the benefits of building permits.

What is a Building Permit?

A building permit gives you legal permission to start construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specification.

When do you need a Building Permit?

The best way to find out if you need a permit is to contact your local building department. Discuss your plans with the code official before you begin construction to determine whether or not you need a permit. If a permit is not required, the code official will answer your construction questions and may provide you with valuable advice. Building permits are required for the following:

- New buildings
- Additions (bedrooms, bathrooms, family rooms, etc.)
- Residential work (decks, garages, fences, fireplace, pools, etc.)
- Renovations (garage conversion, basement finishing, kitchen expansions, re-roof etc.)

Other types of permits that may be required include:

- Electric systems
- Plumbing systems
- HVAC (heating, ventilating, air conditioning) systems

What Good Does a Permit Do?

Your home or business is an investment. If your construction project does not comply with the codes adopted by your community, the value of your investment could be reduced. Property insurers may not cover work done without permits and inspections. If you decide to sell a home or building that has had modifications without a permit, you may be required to remove the addition, leave it unoccupied, or perform costly repairs.

A property owner who can show that code requirements were strictly and consistently met, as demonstrated by municipality's carefully maintained records, has a strong ally if something happens to trigger a potentially destructive lawsuit. Your permit also allows the code official to protect the public by reducing the potential hazards of unsafe construction and ensuring public health, safety, and welfare. By following code guidelines, your completed project will meet minimum standards of safety and will be less likely to cause injury to you, your family, your friends, and future owners.



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The Simple Process

Talk to Your Local Code Official

Your code official wants your project to be a success and will help you avoid potential problems that could cost you time and money. You will be asked some basic questions (what you planning to do and where), advised of any requirements, and referred to other departments for approval, if needed. The code official will provide you with the resources and information needed for compliance with the applicable building codes. You will then receive an application for a building permit.

Submit Application

At this stage you will document the “who, what, when, and how” details of the job, along with any sketches or plans of the proposed work. These should be drawn to scale.

Review Process

The code official will review your plans and determine if your project is in compliance with local requirements. If your plans meet the requirements, a permit will be issued. If not, the code official may suggest solutions to help correct the problem.

Receive Permit

Now that you have been approved for a permit, you have legal permission to start construction. A fee based on the size of the job is collected to cover the cost of the application, the review, and the inspection process. An experienced code official is available to you should you have any questions concerning your project. You should consider your code official as an ally who will help you make your project a success. Separate permits are required for electrical, plumbing, heating or air-conditioning work.

Job Site Visits

On-site inspections will be required to make certain the work conforms to the permit, local codes, and plans. Again, you will have access to the expertise of the code official to help you with questions or concerns regarding the project and to ward off potentially costly mistakes. The code official will let you know approximately how many inspections may be needed for your project.

Usually, a one or two day notice is needed when requesting an inspection.

Final Approval

The code official will provide documentation when construction is complete and code compliance is determined. You will then have the personal satisfaction of a job done right. Enjoy your new surroundings with the peace of mind and knowledge that they meet the safety standards in your community.

It takes everyone in a community to keep our homes, schools, offices, stores, and other buildings safe for public use. Your safe construction practices help protect you, your family, your friends, and your investment. Be sure to get your local code official involved with your project, because the building department is on your side.