

# Building Code FAQ's

## Related Questions

### Do I need a plumbing permit?

A plumbing permit is required to do the following:

- To replace water heaters, alter piping inside a wall or ceiling or beneath a floor, and for plumbing in all new installations.
- To do emergency repair, alteration, or replacement of freeze-damaged or leaking concealed piping, if new piping exceeds 5 feet.
- To remodel or add on to your one- or two-family dwelling when existing plumbing is to be relocated. This includes installation of building sewers, water service, and rain drains outside the building.

A plumbing permit is not required in the following circumstances:

- When a property owner does ordinary minor repairs to plumbing systems on his or her own property. "Ordinary minor repairs" means repair, replacement, or maintenance of existing accessible fixtures, parts, and appliances and their related water and drain attachments. Do not alter an existing plumbing system without a permit.
- When a property owner or licensed plumber performs emergency repairs to or replaces freeze-damaged or leaking concealed piping, provided new piping doesn't exceed 5 feet in length.

If you are not sure if you need a permit, call the Building Codes Division at (503) 338-3697.

### Do I need a structural permit?

A permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, move, or demolish any one- or two-family dwelling or related structure. For example, you need a building permit to:

- Add a room.
- Build, demolish, or move a carport, garage, or shed of more than 200 square feet.
- Finish an attic, garage, or basement to make additional habitable living space.
- Cut a new window or door opening or widen existing openings.

- Move, remove, or add walls.
- Apply roofing when all of the old roofing is removed and new sheathing is installed.
- Build a stairway.
- Build a deck more than 30 inches above grade.
- Put up a fence more than seven feet high.

## **Do I need an electrical permit?**

An electrical permit is required to do the following:

- To install or alter any permanent wiring or electrical device.
- To run any additional wiring, put in an electrical outlet or light fixture, install a receptacle for a garage-door opener, or convert from the fuse box to circuit breakers.
- To install or alter low-voltage systems such as security alarms or stereo or computer systems.

For homeowners, a permit is not required to replace defective electrical devices as maintenance on an existing electrical installation.

You must be both the owner and the occupant of a dwelling to obtain a permit to do the electrical work yourself. You may not do work on a house or residential unit intended for sale, lease, rent, or exchange. If you do not own and do not intend to live in the unit, a licensed electrical contractor must do the work.

Effective Oct. 4, 1997, a landlord, landlord's agent, or the employee of the landlord or landlord's agent may replace an existing garbage disposal, dishwasher or electric water heater with a similar appliance of 30 amps or less, single phase, in residential properties, without an electrical license issued by the Building Codes Division.

If you have any questions concerning your eligibility to work on a building, call the Building Codes Division, (503) 338-3697.

## **How do I get a permit?**

When you use a licensed contractor, the contractor will get the necessary permits. Always request and retain copies for your records.

If you are doing the work yourself, you can call (503) 338-3697, or visit us at 800 Exchange Street, Suite 100, Astoria, Oregon. Getting a permit is often as easy as filling out the application and paying the fee.



- The five digit permit number
- The job site address
- Inspection type
- The contact information where you can be reached
- Unless all of the work is outside and accessible, an adult needs to be at the site to provide access for the inspector.

Please direct any questions or concerns regarding the inspection request procedure to Building Official Van Wilfinger (503) 338-3697.

## **How do permits protect the safety and value of my home?**

Permits ensure that a certified inspector inspects the construction project or installation. Inspections help make sure work is done safely and to code. When an inspector approves work, you can ask questions from an expert and know that the work has been checked for safety violations. This is of particular value to the do-it-yourselfer who doesn't make installations every day. Incorrect installations can result in house fires, flood damage, and/or structural problems.

Permits are designed to help ensure that licensed contractors do the work if the homeowner doesn't handle the job. Only [Construction Contractors Board](#) (CCB) licensed contractors, and those who carry a trade license, such as plumbers and electricians, are allowed to legally work in Oregon. State and local building departments issue permits only to contractors who are properly licensed and bonded.

## **What about value? Getting a permit can save you money.**

Inspections help ensure that work meets the building code. Inspections not only reveal minor problems that could lead to costly repairs, but also liability and life-safety concerns such as structural weaknesses, dangerous wiring, or defective plumbing.

When it comes to selling a house, realtors and lenders may require that any construction work be done with permits to ensure that the house is safe for future occupants. If work is not permitted, instead of closing on your home, you'll have to scramble to catch up with permits and inspections and additional repair work if the installations weren't made to code.

## Here's what homeowners can do to protect themselves:

Insist on permits. It doesn't pay to cut corners when it comes to your biggest financial asset -- your home.

[Check a contractor's CCB license](#) to ensure that a contractor is legally licensed and bonded to work in Oregon. Beware of a contractor willing to work without permits.

Use or insist that the contractor use only licensed [plumbers](#) and [electricians](#) . Along with homeowners working on their own homes, only licensed plumbers and electricians are legally allowed to do plumbing or electrical work in Oregon. Professional licenses reflect four years of intense training and annual continuing education and ensure that contractors are qualified to do the work.

## What can I do without a permit?

You do not need a permit to do the following minor repairs and maintenance on a one- or two-family dwelling:

- Paint buildings that are not historic landmarks.
- Blow insulation into existing homes.
- Put up storm windows.
- Install window awnings not more than 54 inches deep (and not in a design zone or historical district) that are supported by an exterior wall and do not project beyond the property line.
- Replace interior wall, floor or ceiling coverings, such as wallboard or sheet vinyl.
- Put up shelving and cabinets.
- Install gutters and downspouts (A plumbing permit is required for stormwater disposal.)
- Replace or repair siding on a wall that is three feet or more from a property line.
- Replace or repair roofing, if there is no replacement of sheathing (a maximum of two layers of roofing is allowed).
- Replace doors or windows if the existing openings aren't widened (unless in a historical district).
- Build a fence up to 6 feet high.
- Pave a walkway.
- Build a patio or deck that is not more than 30 inches above grade.

## What information will I need to get a building permit?

Construction plans should be submitted electronically in .pdf format. All plan reviews are completed electronically. Once the review is completed and the permit is ready to issue, you will have electronic access to your approved plans. You must print at least one color copy to keep on the construction site at all times. Failure to have an approved set of plans on site will because your inspection to be canceled and possible reinspection fees.

Typical plans include (but are not limited to) the following drawings; a site plan, erosion control plan, foundation plan, floor plans, roof framing, lateral bracing design, truss details and layout plan, energy measures, and cross sections showing construction details. In addition, you will need:

- The address and legal description of the property
- A description of the work proposed
- The owner's name, address and phone number
- If a contractor is doing the work, the contractor's name, address, phone number, and state license number

## Do I need a mechanical permit?

A mechanical permit is required to do the following:

- Install or change any part of a heating or cooling system that must be vented into any kind of chimney, including unvented decorative appliances
- Install a woodstove, fireplace insert, pellet stove, or related venting
- Install, alter, or repair gas piping between the meter and an appliance (indoors or outdoors)
- Install bath fans, dryer exhausts, kitchen range exhausts, and appliances that are required to be vented

If you are not sure you need a permit, call the Building Codes Division, (503) 338-3697.

**Contractors** are able to apply for and purchase permits online with Epermitting at [BuildingPermits.Oregon.gov](http://BuildingPermits.Oregon.gov).

**Non-Contractors/Homeowners** are able to submit applications by mail, fax, email. After we receive the application, we will process the application and email a link to pay the fees online through the ePermitting program. Once issued, the permit will be emailed to you.

As the owner of a one- or two-family dwelling, you or an immediate family member can do it yourself. A friend, neighbor, tenant or family relative cannot legally be paid to do any work unless he or she is a CCB-registered contractor. If you choose to hire a contractor, they must be

a Construction Contractors Board (CCB) registered contractor to do the work. Only a licensed journeyman or apprentice plumber employed by a licensed plumbing contractor or an individual licensed by the State of Oregon State Fire Marshal may legally install propane piping.

If applying for a permit to install or replace a woodstove or fireplace insert, you will be asked whether the appliance is certified to meet Department of Environmental Quality emission standards. The inspector will check the label on the stove or stove insert at the time of inspection. If you are not sure whether the appliance is certified to meet emission standards, ask the dealer or a mechanical inspector.

If you have questions regarding a contractor's eligibility to perform work on your property, call the [Construction Contractors Board](#), (503) 378-4621 or (503) 365-7484.

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