

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These are some typical questions and answers which may help you with the permitting phase of your Home Improvement project.

Q: Why do I need permits for some things and not others?

A: State law sets the requirements for things like when you do and don't need a permit, how the work must be done, what needs to be inspected, and licensing of Inspectors and Code Officials. We interpret the State Law and apply it to your project.

Q: Do I need a permit to replace the roofing or siding on my single or two family home?

A: Yes, a permit is required. However, you may begin the work before you actually have a permit in your hand as long as you notify this office by phone or in person prior to commencing the work during normal business hours, and pay for the permit within 5 days of notification.

Q: I have heard that there is something called minor work. Can I start that work before I actually obtain a permit and pay for the permit up to 5 days later?

A: Yes, but make sure what you are planning is indeed "minor work". Please contact the Construction Office if you have questions about what might be minor work.

Q: Are there certain types of work which don't require permits at all?

A: Yes this is considered "ordinary maintenance". These are usually items that represent ordinary maintenance such as painting and carpeting in residential structures, replacement of storm windows and doors of the same size openings, wall paper, replacement of kitchen cabinets, etc. We strongly encourage you to call the Construction Office and check to see if a permit is needed.

Q: How much is my permit going to cost?

A: Permit fees are established by Township ordinance in accordance with guidelines from the State. Basically, the permit fee for any new building is based on the volume of the structure plus various per item costs for plumbing, electrical, and fire protection devices. For alterations or renovations, fees are based on a percentage of the normal cost of work plus various per item costs for plumbing, electrical, and fire protection devices. Still other types of work are based on a flat fee.

Q: How many inspections will my project need?

A: The type and number of inspections are determined in accordance with the scope and type of work being performed. For "minor work", only final inspections are required. For other classes of work, once a permit application is reviewed by this office, a "required inspections" sheet will be given to you for your project when you pick up your permit.

Q: How long does it take to get a permit for construction?

A: If the application for the permit has already received all "prior approvals", we will review your application within as little as a few days to a maximum of 20 business days, depending on the complexity of the project and, our current workload.

If the application is for a simple interior alteration (finishing a basement, moving a wall, etc) the review period will only be a few days; if there are any deficiencies in the application, you will be advised in writing of just what additional or corrected information is needed.

If the application is for a new home or is otherwise more complex, the review period is 20 working days maximum.

Q: How much information is required on the plans if I'm building a new house, addition or separate structure?

A: Sorry this has to be long answer: the amount of information depends on what type of work you're doing: If you are building a new home, addition, or separate building, the plans shall include at a minimum, the following from the state law:

(a) Any application for a construction permit for a single family residence shall be accompanied by at least two copies of plans drawn to scale, with sufficient clarity and detailed dimensions to show the nature and character of the work to be performed. Plans submitted shall not be required to show more detail or include more information than is reasonably necessary to assure compliance with the requirements of the Uniform Construction Code and rules in this chapter.

(b) Plans containing the following information shall be considered to meet the requirements of (a) above:

1. Site diagram consisting of a site plan showing size and location of all new and existing construction on the site with distances from lot lines and indicating new building services, location and size.

2. Construction plans consisting of a scale drawing showing foundation, floor plans, and elevations, including structural framing notes for all floors, ceilings and roofs. Only girders and columns need be identified and located on the plan. Included on the drawings shall be a loading schedule indicating the live loads for which the structure is designed.

3. The following details and submissions shall be required:

i. A cross section through one typical wall showing construction details from footing to and including roof framing. This section shall indicate all construction materials used including roofing, vapor barriers, sheathing type and thickness, insulation type and thickness, windows, glazing type if other than standard window glazing is used, interior finish material, floor type and thickness, structure, foundation and footings. Decorative material shall not be required to be shown unless it contributes to the structural integrity of the section.

ii. When roof or other truss systems are used, the details required by shall be shown.

iii. Electrical details indicating lighting; receptacles; motors and equipment; smoke detectors; service entrance locations; size and type (overhead or underground); panel size, location; number of proposed circuits. A symbol legend shall be included.

iv. Plumbing details indicating the locations of fixtures and a notice or table listing water and drainage pipe sizes. A note stating if sewage disposal is to public sewer or individual septic system shall be included.

v. Mechanical details indicating the type of heating system; location, size and type of heating unit, noting the distribution method and indicating design rates, location of fire dampers and safeguards; and location, type and size of flue.

vi. Energy subcode compliance shall be demonstrated with either detailed calculations, Energy Star compliance documentation, the submission of printouts from software recognized by the Department, such as RES Check, or the prescriptive packages described in Bulletin 03-2. RES Check software is available from the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Codes and Standards, PO Box 802, Trenton, New Jersey 08625 or from the U.S. Department of Energy at www.energycodes.gov.

ii. Plumbing plans, electrical plans and mechanical plans may be prepared by licensed plumbers, licensed electrical contractors and mechanical contractors, respectively, in accordance with these regulations.

5. Construction plans, and electrical, plumbing, and mechanical details may be shown on more than one drawing.

If you are doing interior alterations only, we generally just need to know if what you are doing is structural, and what you plan to do regarding electrical, plumbing, or fire protection work. Usually sketches and a written description of the work will suffice. In any case, if we have questions, you will be contacted for clarification. Occasionally permit are issued with conditions, meaning that additional information is required to be submitted, but we do not judge the issues to be major. **Remember: 2 copies of any plans or specifications will be required.**

Q: Do I get a set of plans back when I pick up my permit?

A: You will receive a set of plans marked "field copy". These need to be kept at the jobsite during the project for the inspector(s) to see. We do not carry plans to the site because they need to be on file as public record. The plans are the inspector's way of verifying that the project is being built as reviewed and approved. You should know that even if you feel that you have built your project as per plan, there is a remote possibility that it can still fail an inspection. We do our best to review plans for code errors but there are times when the plans do not tell the whole story and there are other times when we all just make mistakes. If we have made a mistake in reviewing your plans and it results in a failed inspection, we will do our best to help you resolve the problem.

Q: Can I draw my own plans?

A: You may draw your own plans if you sign the part of the application that certifies that you own and live in the house, will perform the work yourself (electrical, plumbing), perform or supervise in the case of building or fire protection. The plan must be, in the opinion of the construction official and appropriate subcode officials, legible and complete for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the regulations.