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Do You Need a Permit for Your Residential Project?



Bureau of
Development
Services
FROM CONCEPT
TO CONSTRUCTION



1900 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97201
503-823-7300
bds@portlandoregon.gov
www.Portland.gov/BDS

Overview

Learn more about residential building permits, electrical permits, mechanical permits, plumbing permits and zoning permits and work that requires a permit for a 1- or 2-family home. When is a residential permit needed? When don't you need a permit for a 1- or 2-family home?

Get information about the types of work that require a permit, and those that do not for residential properties (1- or 2-family homes). Residential is defined as 1- or 2-family homes. Apartments, buildings, and townhouses with more than 2 units are considered commercial and have different requirements.

Why do you need permits?

- **It's the law.** State Building Code requires that permits be obtained for certain types of work. Permits provide a legal record of work performed.
- **Permits protect** you, your family, your business and your investment. (They are designed to help ensure that licensed contractors do the work when required.)
- **Inspections** ensure that work is done safely and that it meets the minimum code requirements.
- **Minor problems** that could lead to costly repairs, liability and life/safety issues can be detected during permit inspections and brought to your attention before the situation worsens.
- **When selling a property**, the buyer, realtor and/or lender may require that unpermitted work be corrected, properly permitted and inspected before closing.
- **Lack of permits** and inspection approvals may void insurance.

Where can you get a permit?

You can apply online for a permit or drop off plans in person with an appointment (www.portland.gov/bds/permit-review-process/apply-or-pay-permits). Visit the Development Services homepage for more information: www.portland.gov/bds

Who can do the work?

Contractors must have a license to work in Oregon. The Oregon Construction Contractors Board (CCB) issues licenses to contractors. The permit application and their company materials must list the license number. Need help finding a contractor?

The CCB website (www.oregon.gov/ccb/Pages/index.aspx) has good tips on how to search for one. Plumbing and Electrical contractors have additional license requirements.

You must be both the owner and occupant of the home to do electrical work yourself. If the home is intended for sale, lease, rent or exchange in the near future, work must be done by a licensed electrical contractor.

What you need for a complete permit application

Search Portland.gov for a project type to find out what you need for a complete application. For example, search for "ADU permits" or "Deck permits."

One- and two-family dwellings

Permits are required for many types of work that you may need or want to have done on your property. This information doesn't cover everything. If you have permitting questions, please contact the Permitting General Information phone number.

Work that requires a residential building permit

Note that all development work must comply with zoning requirements, whether or not it requires a building permit.

- Build a one- or two-family home
- Build, demolish or add a room, garage, shed or other enclosed structure attached to a house

- Build, demolish or move any structure that is more than 200 square feet in area or has a height of more than 15 feet measured from the grade plane to the average height of the highest roof surface. Note, if the parcel of land is over 2 acres and the structure is at least 20 feet from property lines and other structures, then a permit is required when the building area is over 400 square feet.
- Add or enlarge a porch cover, patio cover, carport or other open-sided roofed structure with an area greater than 200 square feet that is attached to a house
- Enclose a patio cover, porch or carport
- Finish an attic, garage or basement to create habitable space
- Add a bathroom in new or existing space
- Cut new window or door opening, widen or reduce the size of existing openings
- Move, remove or add walls
- Build or replace an exterior stairway more than 30 inches above grade
- Build a retaining wall that exceeds four feet high measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall or any retaining wall affected by the weight of an adjacent slope, or nearby driveway or structure
- Build a deck more than 30 inches high
- Put up a fence more than seven feet high
- Move more than 10 cubic yards of earth
- Pour concrete sidewalks, slabs and driveways more than 30 inches above adjacent grade or over any story or basement
- Install a barrier around any swimming pool, or construct an in-ground swimming pool.
- Replace roofing in a wildfire hazard zone or on a townhouse
- Reroof a house or duplex when more than 15% of the existing roof sheathing is being removed and replaced
- Installation of solar roof panels or solar roof coverings.
- Tree planting, preservation, or related requirements may apply to your project under Title 11, Trees (the Tree Code). To find out more about these regulations and how they affect your project please visit www.portland.gov/trees or call 503-823-8733.

Get more information about how to apply on the Building and Zoning Permit Application page. (www.portland.gov/bds/building-and-zoning-permit-application)

Work that requires a zoning permit

- Build or install a garage or carport less than or equal to 200 square feet in area and less than 10 feet in height measured from the finished floor level to the top of the top plate to confirm the location on the site complies with zoning code requirements
- Create a new or enlarged parking area or driveway, or pave a previously graveled parking area
- Make any improvement required as a condition of your land use review approval which does not require a building permit
- Make any alteration to exterior development, including site work such as constructing a patio or deck, clearing trees, or installing landscaping in any zone with restrictions on development

Read more information about zoning permits:

www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use/zoning-permits

Work that requires a residential electrical permit

You must be both the owner and occupant of the home in order to do electrical work yourself. If the home is intended for sale, lease, rent or exchange in the near future, work must be done by a licensed electrical contractor. A permit is required to:

- Install, change or repair any hard-wired electrical system
- Run any additional wiring, put in an additional electrical outlet or light fixture, or change your fuse box to circuit breakers
- Install or alter low voltage systems such as security alarms, central vacuum systems, or low voltage lighting
- Add or replace electrical wall/baseboard heaters

Read more information about electrical permits: www.portland.gov/bds/residential-permitting/residential-electrical-permits.

Work that requires a residential mechanical permit

- Install or change any part of a heating or cooling system which has duct work or must be vented into any kind of chimney or vent
- Install a wood stove or fireplace insert
- Install, alter or repair gas piping between the meter and an appliance (indoors and outdoors)
- Install a fuel oil tank
- Install exterior heat pump or air conditioning condenser units

Get more information about mechanical permits:

www.portland.gov/bds/residential-permitting/residential-mechanical-permits

Work that requires a residential plumbing permit

- Repair, replace, relocate or add to the piping system within your home
- Install new plumbing fixtures such as toilets, sinks, showers, tubs, dishwashers, etc.
- Replace a water heater
- Replace existing plumbing fixtures if the replacement involves concealed plumbing connections
- Install rain drains, cesspools, septic systems, drywells, sewer lines, water lines, backflow prevention assemblies for lawn sprinkler systems or cap a sewer
- Cap of fixtures that have been removed

Note: Adding a bathroom not only requires a plumbing and building permit but may also require an electrical and/or mechanical permit.

Read more about residential plumbing permits: www.portland.gov/bds/residential-permitting/residential-plumbing-permits

Work that doesn't require a residential building permit

Some minor repairs and maintenance on one- or two-family homes do not require a building permit. The project must meet the Building and Zoning Code requirements even when a building permit is not required.

Additional Zoning regulations may apply to sites subject to land use reviews, sites within Overlay Zones—such as Environmental, Design and Historic Resource Protection—and sites within Plan Districts. For example, historic review may be required to paint the exterior of a Historic Landmark, design review may be required to replace exterior siding, or environmental review may be required to build a patio or deck. Minimum setbacks of 5 feet or greater may apply to sheds and other accessory structures.

Outside work

- Paint buildings
- Install insulation in existing homes
- Install storm windows
- Install window awnings, not more than 54 inches deep and not in a design zone, that are supported by an exterior wall and do not project beyond the property line
- Install gutters and downspouts (a plumbing permit may still be required for stormwater disposal)
- Replace or repair siding that is not required to be fire resistive
- Replace or repair roofing, including replacement of no more than 15% of the existing roof sheathing (a maximum of two layers of roofing is allowed), except if the structure is in a wildfire hazard zone or is a townhouse.
- Replace doors or windows if the existing openings are not widened or reduced in size
- Install swings and other play structures

Build a fence up to seven feet high (except in front setback areas – refer to the Fence Guide (www.portland.gov/bds/residential-permitting/residential-building-permits/fence-permits), or if the fence encloses a swimming pool)

- Pave a walkway
- Build stairs, patio, or deck that is not more than 30 inches above grade
- Build a shed or other non-habitable one-story detached accessory structure, provided that the floor area does not exceed 200 square feet and the height does not exceed 15 feet from grade plane to the average height of the highest roof surface. Note, if the parcel of land is over 2 acres and the structure is at least 20 feet from property lines and other structures, then a permit is not required when the building area is not over 400 square feet.
- Repave driveways where expansion is not proposed
- Build a patio or porch cover not over 200 square feet and supported by an exterior building wall
- Construct a non-habitable accessory structure composed of a rigid frame covered with a fabric membrane that does not exceed 500 square feet in area, is only 1 story in height, and is not closer than 3' to a property line.

Please note: If your property is in a flood hazard area, additional requirements apply. Contact Site Development to discuss your project at 503-823-6892.

Inside work

- Replace interior wall, floor or ceiling covering (such as wallboard or sheet vinyl)
- Construct non-structural partitions where these do not enclose habitable space, such as for a closet.
- Install shelving and cabinets
- Remove and reinstall a toilet when installing new floor covering
- Replace accessible plumbing fixtures to make emergency plumbing repairs or to replace freeze-damaged or leaking concealed plumbing pipes that are no more than five feet in length

Schedule an inspection

1. Call the 24-hour Requests for Inspection phone number 503-823-7000
2. Enter your IVR or permit number
3. Enter the three-digit inspection code for the type of inspection you are requesting
4. Enter a phone number where you can be reached during weekdays. Explain if you want the inspection in the morning or afternoon. Leave a voicemail with plan location or lockbox code.
5. There must be an adult over age 18 to let the inspector inside
6. Read more about residential permit inspections: www.portland.gov/bds/residential-permitting/residential-permit-inspections

RESOURCES

Contact Us

Bureau of Development Services
City of Portland, Oregon
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Portland, OR 97201
www.portland.gov/bds

Office Hours:

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
BDS main number: 503-823-7300

Permit Information is available at the following location:

- Building Permits: www.portland.gov/permits/building-permits
- Trade Permits: www.portland.gov/permits/trade-permits
- Development Services Center (First Floor)
For Hours Call 503-823-7310 or visit www.portland.gov/bds
- Permitting Services (Second Floor)
For Hours Call 503-823-7310 or visit www.portland.gov/bds

Important Telephone Numbers

DSC automated information line	503-823-7310
Building code information	503-823-1456
Parking, sidewalk, lane and street closure permits	503-823-7365
Driveway curb cuts	503-823-7002
Planning and Zoning information	503-823-7526
Permit information for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sewer and signs.....	503-823-7363
Permitting process and fee information	503-823-7357
Resources and records	503-823-7660
BDS 24-hour inspection request line (requires IVR number and three-digit inspection code)	503-823-7000
Residential information for one and two family dwellings....	503-823-7388
Oregon Relay Service	711
Multnomah County Taxation & Assessment	503-988-3326
Multnomah County Planning Department	503-988-3043
Tree Hotline	503-823-8733

For more detailed information regarding the bureau's hours of operation and available services:

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.PORTLAND.GOV/BDS**

Note: All information in this brochure is subject to change.

Traducción e interpretación | Chuyển Ngữ hoặc Phiên Dịch | 翻译或传译
Turjumida ama Fasiraadda | 翻訳または通訳 | Письменный или устный перевод
Traducere sau Interpretare | 번역 및 통역 | الترجمة التحريرية أو الشفوية |
ການແປພາສາ ຫຼື ການອະທິບາຍ | Письмовий або усний переклад



503-823-7300



BDS@PortlandOregon.gov



www.portland.gov/bds/brochures-forms/translated-brochures-forms

The City of Portland is committed to providing meaningful access. For accommodations, modifications, translation, interpretation, or other services, please call **503-823-7300** or the **Oregon Relay Service** at **711**.