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When Do I Need A Building Permit?

Simply put, most building, renovation and demolition activities require a permit. The Building code requires that all construction activities need a permit and then gives exceptions to the rule. When in doubt, always apply for a permit or ask the Building Inspector. Some activities may require a zoning permit or other approvals as well such as HDC approval.

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From the 2015 International Building Code and 2015 International Residential Code:

105.1 Required. Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.

(This includes permits required for replacement windows, new windows, roofing, and siding)

[Windows Used for Emergency Escape and Rescue](#)_(Egress Window)
[Egress Window Clear Opening Sizing Chart](#)

105.2 Work exempt from permit. Exemptions from permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of this code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.

Permits shall not be required for the following:

Building:

1. One-story detached accessory structures provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet (2015 IBC) and 200 square feet for residential use for one and two family.
2. Fences not over 7 feet (1829 mm) high.
3. Oil derricks.
4. Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet (1219 mm) in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge.
5. Water tanks supported directly on grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons (18 925 L) and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2:1.
6. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches (762 mm) above adjacent grade, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an accessible route.
7. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
8. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.
9. Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep, do not exceed 5,000 gallons (18 925 L) and are installed entirely above ground.
10. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems.
11. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one- and two-family dwellings.
12. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches (1372 mm) from the exterior wall and do not require additional support of Groups R-3 and U occupancies.
13. Non-fixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches (1753 mm) in height.
14. Decks not exceeding 200 square feet (18.58 m²) in area, that are not more than 30 inches (762 mm) above *grade* at any point, are not attached to a *dwelling* and do not serve the exit door required by Section R311.4 of the IRC.

Electrical:

1. Repairs and maintenance: Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
2. Radio and television transmitting stations: The provisions of this code shall not apply to electrical equipment used for radio and television transmissions, but do

apply to equipment and wiring for a power supply and the installations of towers and antennas.

3. Temporary testing systems: A permit shall not be required for the installation of any temporary system required for the testing or servicing of electrical equipment or apparatus.

4. Listed cord-and-plug connected temporary decorative lighting (IRC)

5. Reinstallation of attachment plug receptacles but not the outlets therefor. (IRC)

6. Replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location. (IRC)

7. Electrical wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus or equipment operating at less than 25 volts and not capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy. (IRC)

8. Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment approved permanently installed receptacles. (IRC)

Gas:

1. Portable heating appliance.

2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliance.

2. Portable ventilation equipment.

3. Portable cooling unit.

4. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.

5. Replacement of any part that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe.

6. Portable evaporative cooler.

7. Self-contained refrigeration system containing 10 pounds (5 kg) or less of refrigerant and actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.

8. Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid. (IRC)

Plumbing:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drain pipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.

2. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and the

removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures

105.2.1 Emergency repairs. Where equipment replacements and repairs must be performed in an emergency situation, the permit application shall be submitted within the next working business day to the building official.

105.2.2 Repairs. Application or notice to the building official is not required for ordinary repairs to structures, replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles. Such repairs shall not include the cutting away of any wall, partition or portion thereof, the removal or cutting of any structural beam or load-bearing support, or the removal or change of any required means of egress, or rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements; nor shall ordinary repairs include addition to, alteration of, replacement or relocation of any standpipe, water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, electric wiring or mechanical or other work affecting public health or general safety.

105.2.3 Public service agencies. A permit shall not be required for the installation, alteration or repair of generation, transmission, distribution or metering or other related equipment that is under the ownership and control of public service agencies by established right.