Building Inspections FAQ

General Permitting Questions

Q. As a homeowner doing my own work at my home, am I required to obtain a permit?
A. Depending on the type of project, you may be required to obtain a permit and register with the City. Please check with the Building Inspections Department for any requirements regarding the building, electrical and plumbing codes and/or any ordinances adopted by the City. Permits are usually required for the following:
? New buildings
? Additions (bedrooms, bathrooms, family rooms, etc.)
? Residential work (garages, fireplaces, pools, water heaters, storage buildings, patio covers, and carports)
? Renovations (garage conversions and kitchen expansions)
? Electrical Systems
? Plumbing Systems
? HVAC (Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning) Systems
? Decks
? Swimming Pools

Q. Why should I get a permit?
A. This is a question many people may ask themselves when planning alterations to their home. A decision not to get a permit could be very costly. Some homeowners are finding when they try to sell or refinance their home, prospective buyers or lending institutions want proof that alterations are in compliance with local codes. Without a permit and inspection on record, there is no proof. The homeowner must then apply for a permit with no guarantee that the remodel will meet the codes, and they face the possibility that the remodel must be redone or removed. This is costly and frustrating and could cause delays in refinancing or a lost sale of their home. Any fire and homeowners' insurance you have may be invalidated if you do work without a permit. If there is a fire in your house, the insurance company may very well use the illegal work as an excuse not to pay on your claim.

Q. How long will it take to get my residential permit application approved?
A. If all the required information is included at the time of submittal, in most cases it will take no more than 3 – 5 working days. You will be notified by phone when it has been reviewed and approved. For information on permit plan review for pools, spa, irrigation systems or other residential projects, please contact Building Inspections at

(512) 262-3911.

Q. Can I do electrical work on my house?
A. Yes, but a permit may be required and it must be installed and comply with the City's adopted electrical code.

Q. When is a permit required for heating or air conditioning work?
A. A permit is required for removal or replacement of a unit. A permit is not required for repair or replacement of parts only. When a permit is required, the contractor must be registered with the City and must obtain the permit before performing any work. All work must comply with the City's adopted codes. For more information, please contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911.

Q. How long is my permit good for after being issued?
A. Most permits expire 180 days from the date of issuance or the date of your last inspection.

Q. Can I install my own irrigation system?
A. Yes, but you must get a permit and list a licensed backflow tester who is registered with the City to test the backflow device. For a list of backflow testers who are currently registered with the City, please contact our office at (512) 262-3911. Any licensed backflow tester may register with the City. All other work can be done by the homeowner.

Q. Do I need a permit to install a light pole in my yard?
A. Yes. We will require a permit to insure the electrical work is done to code. If you are hiring an electrician to do the work, they will need to be registered with the City and they will pull the permit. A homeowner can do their own electrical work but will be required to pull the permit listing themselves as the electrician. All electrical work must conform to code. See the Building Inspections home page for a list of the current codes the City has adopted. For information on the permitting process for this project, please contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911.

Q. Why should my contractor pull the permit instead of me, the homeowner?
A. When a contractor is doing the work, they must pull the permit because they are doing the work and will be responsible for making sure the work meets code requirements. They are required to be registered with the City. They must also carry and provide proof of liability insurance. Always ask to see the permit before work is started.

Q. Is there something than can be done about the construction noise by my house?
A. Construction working hours are limited to 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. The police department enforces these hours.

Accessory Building (Storage Building) Questions

Q. Is a permit required for an accessory building (storage shed)?
A. Accessory buildings require a permit. All accessory structures must not be placed in an easement and must meet set-back requirements.

Commercial Permit Questions

Q. Do subcontractors need to pull permits for commercial jobs?
A. No. The general contractor pulls the permit and lists the subcontractors (plumber, electrician, mechanical contractor) that will be working on the project. The subcontractors will, however, need to be registered to work in the City. If a subcontractor is doing work after the main permit (the permit issued to the general contractor) has been finaled, then the subcontractor would need to pull a separate permit. For more information on commercial construction, contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911.

Foundation Questions

Q. Is a permit required for foundation repair?
A. Yes. The foundation company doing the work must be registered with the City and apply for a permit. They must submit an original engineering design. Make sure you see the permit before the work is started. At the time of inspection by the City, a second original letter from the engineer is to be at the job site verifying repairs were

performed to engineered specifications. For more information contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911.
Homeowner's Association Questions.

Q. My Home Owner's Association (HOA) is telling me that I cannot build my project. Is this true?
A. While your project may by approved by the City, you should check your deed restrictions and HOA requirements before applying for a permit. The City does not enforce HOA restrictions and/or requirements.

Deck & Patio Questions

Q. Do I need a permit to build a deck?
A. A permit is required for any deck, as well as for any type of roof structure, including open arbors, per the City's adopted building code.

Q. Is a permit required to build a patio cover?
A. Yes. For more information on patio cover requirements, contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911.
Sign Questions

Q. I'm in the process of selling my house, what types of signs can I use to advertise? Do I need permits for those signs?
A. You may have one sign in your yard advertising the sale of your house. You may also have one open house sign at the time of your open house. No permit is required for these signs as long as they are less than 6 square feet. No directional signs may be placed on public property or in a public right-of-way.

Q. I have a home business, can I advertise with signs?
A. There is no provision in the sign ordinance which would allow for this type of advertising.

Q. I'm having a garage sale, can I put up signs? Do I need a permit for those signs?
A. You may put directional signs out 24 hours prior to the sale and they must be removed within 24 hours of the conclusion of the sale. These signs must be less than six square feet. They cannot be placed on public property or in a public right-of-way. You do not need permits for these signs.

Swimming Pool/Spa Questions

Q. Do I need a permit to install a self-contained spa?
A. Yes. The inspectors must inspect the electrical and/or plumbing work to insure it meets code requirements.

Q. When is a p-trap required on a spa?
A. When the spa is 749 gallons or more and/or if spa is smaller than 749 gallons and drains into the public sewer system a p-trap is required.

Water Heater/Plumbing Questions

Q. Is it true that replacing a water heater in my house requires a permit?
A. Yes. State law requires that the City perform an inspection of water heater replacements. If hiring a contractor to replace your water heater (gas or electric), the plumber must be registered with the City, obtain a permit before the work is performed (unless it is an emergency replacement being done while the permit office is closed) and make sure an approved final inspection from the City is obtained. If the permit cannot be obtained before the work is performed due to the permit office being closed, a permit must be obtained on the next business day. If a homeowner is to perform the work, they must bring proof of their homestead exemption when they apply for their permit. The work must comply with the current plumbing codes and ordinances.

Q. The plumber tells me that my water heater now requires a drip pan. Is this true?
A. If the water heater is adjacent to an outside wall, then a drip pan and a 1" drain is needed. The drain must terminate to the outside. This applies to all water heaters, gas or electric.

Q. I am having my water heater replaced and the plumber tells me that it must be elevated. Is this true?

A. Yes, the ignition source of the water heater must be elevated at least 18” above the garage floor. This applies to all water heaters, gas or electric.

Q. Does the building code allow plumbers to install water heater in an attic?
A. Yes, but certain conditions must be followed as required by the International Residential Code (IRC). A permit is required. Please contact Building Inspections at (512) 262-3911 for more information.

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