



Community Development Services

1333 NW Eastman Parkway Gresham OR 97030

General Information 503.618.2845

Frequently Asked Questions

<p>Why should I get a permit?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>What is the purpose of the permits and codes?</p>	<p>The purpose behind building codes is to give reasonable assurance that a home is safe from structural failure, fire hazards from electrical and heating systems, electrical shock, and health risks. The permits provide a permanent record of the work performed and inspections conducted on the project.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for obtaining permits?</p>	<p>The property owner or contractor is responsible for obtaining structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and manufactured dwelling setup permits. For electrical work, Oregon law requires that if an electrical contractor performs the work, the contractor is responsible for obtaining the permit. Electrical permits are non-transferable.</p>
<p>Do I have to have a license to do work on my own home?</p>	<p>No. A homeowner (who owns and occupies the house) may do any or all of the work (building, plumbing, mechanical [heating and air conditioning], and electrical). If you are not sure of your abilities to do any or all of the work, it is recommended that you hire a licensed professional.</p>
<p>When are plans required?</p>	<p>You must submit structural plans or drawings for any new construction or for an addition or alteration to an existing building. Plans aren't required for nonstructural repairs and work for which a permit isn't required. However, a change in use or occupancy may require plans even if there are no structural alterations. Check with your local planning or zoning department to determine whether a permit for change in use or occupancy is required.</p>
<p>When am I required to obtain local zoning approval?</p>	<p>Before submitting permit applications, you're required to obtain local land use/zoning approval for any new structure and for any work that increases the area or height of a structure or changes the use of a structure. You may be required to obtain local zoning approval for electrical and plumbing work before a permit will be issued. For more information, contact your local planning and zoning department.</p>
<p>When do I have to hire an architect or engineer to design my project and prepare the plans?</p>	<p>An architect or engineer is not required for any occupancy building that has a ground area of 4,000 square feet or less and is 20 feet tall or less, for single-family dwellings, for accessory buildings to single-family dwellings, and for agricultural buildings. Engineered plans may be required for the alteration or repair of the structural portion of an existing building with a ground area of more than 4,000 square feet or that is more than 20 feet in height, or when the occupancy classification requires a fire-and-life-safety review, regardless of the building's size.</p>
<p>How long does it take to get a permit?</p>	<p>The length of time varies depending on the complexity of the project. If permits can be processed and issued over-the-counter, they are. But if plan review or other consultation is required prior to issuance, they may take longer to process and issue. Certain permit applications under pre-arranged conditions can be accepted via mail or fax.</p>
<p>Can I apply for a permit</p>	<p>A limited scope of over-the-counter electrical, mechanical, and plumbing</p>

online?	permits may be applied for and paid for through the electronic permitting system via the internet. The web site location is https://egov.greshamoregon.gov/Click2GovBP/Index.jsp .
When can I start work?	When an actual construction permit is issued to you, work can begin. The permit must be available on the job site and available to the inspector. If you've submitted plans and specifications, one set of plans stamped "Approved" will be returned to you. These approved plans, along with the construction permit, must be available on the job site and available to the inspector.
When does my permit expire?	Your permit expires if work isn't started within 180 days from the date of issue. Once you have begun work, your permit expires if work is suspended or abandoned for 180 days or more. If you can't work within a 180-day period and don't wish to abandon the project, you may submit a written request to extend your permit for an additional 180-day period.
If I take out a permit to remodel a home built ten years ago, do I build to the code in effect when the home was originally built?	No. The new work must be constructed under the codes in effect today.
If I remodel my house, do I have to bring the entire home up to the codes in effect today?	No. Only the new portion being remodeled must meet the current codes unless it creates a hazard for the existing building such as overloading an existing beam.
What if I have made an alteration to my home without realizing I needed a permit and I want to correct the situation? Will I be subject to a fine? Do I have to tear the whole project down and start over?	Penalties can be levied for those who refuse to comply with the law. The Building Services Division would rather see a building conform to the code than punish a homeowner. If a homeowner discovers they did not obtain a permit when required, they do not necessarily have to tear the project down and start over. If the alteration can meet the applicable codes, it can be approved. Our inspectors won't necessarily approve something they cannot see and may require small sections of wall or roof covering be removed to verify the construction meets the code. There can be no guarantee that some changes may need to be made, and some may not be easy to accomplish.
Do I need a permit to replace a hot water heater?	Yes. Oregon law requires plumbing permits for water heaters because of potential safety hazards such as fire, electric shock or explosion.
What is a "C of O" and do I need one?	A Certificate of Occupancy is a document issued to the owner of a building once all building and development conditions administered by the City have been met. The City provides a C of O for all residential new home construction, commercial new construction, commercial tenant improvement and change of use.