

Commercial Work Exempt from Building Permits

Important information you need to know BEFORE applying for a Building Permit. The Building, Plumbing, Mechanical, and Electrical Codes allow for exceptions to the requirement to obtain a permit. Note that these exceptions are for the permit process only and do not cover the regulations of other departments, homeowner associations, or other regulatory agencies.

Improvements outside the structure may require planning review for consistency with setback requirements. **It is always best to ask planning and building staff if your project is subject to specific standards (setbacks, height, etc.) or requires a permit prior to beginning the construction process.** The building permit exceptions are listed below.

Section R105.2 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. A single one-story, detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses, and similar uses, provided that the floor area *does not exceed* 120 square feet (11.15 m²) without electrical, plumbing, mechanical etc. It is permissible that these structures still be regulated by Section 710A, despite exemption from permit.
2. 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 or impounding Class I, II or IIIA liquids. (Note: Planning permit is required.)
3. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops, and similar finished work.
4. Nonfixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters, and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches (1753 mm) in height.

Electrical:

1. Listed cord-and-plug connected temporary decorative lighting.
2. Reinstallation of attachment plug receptacles but not the outlets.
3. Replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location.
4. Electrical wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus, or equipment operating at less than 25 volts and not capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.
5. Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Gas:

1. Portable heating, cooking, or clothes drying appliances.
2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.

3. Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliances.
2. Portable ventilation appliances.
3. Portable cooling units.
4. Steam, hot- or chilled-water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by the code.
5. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
6. Portable evaporative coolers.
7. Self-contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower or less.
8. Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

Plumbing:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste, or vent pipe; provided that if any concealed trap, drainpipe, 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 inspections made congruent to the 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.

R105.2.1 Emergency Repairs: Where equipment replacement and repairs must be performed in an emergency, the permit application shall be submitted within the next working business day to the building official.

R105.2.2 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 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.

R105.2.3 Public Service Agencies: A permit shall not be required for the installation, alteration, or repair of generation, transmission, distribution, metering, or other related equipment that is under the ownership and control of public service agencies by established right.