



BOROUGH OF WEST READING CODE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT

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BUILDING PERMIT INFORMATION SHEET

What is a Building Permit?

It is an official document or certificate issued by the Borough and regulated by the State which has jurisdiction and authorizes performance of a specified activity. The building project must be in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

Why Do I Need a Building Permit?

The Building Codes are minimum safety standards of all building construction. These codes ensure the safety of you, your family, anyone entering the building/structure and all future occupants.

A Building Permit is required for the following:

- New homes
- Residential additions (bedrooms, bathrooms, family rooms, sun rooms, etc.) An addition is defined as an extension or increase in floor area or height.
- Attached car ports
- Renovations that change building egress (moving a door, stairs or window location).
- Renovations that change any structural feature (header, beam, column, interior bearing wall, exterior bearing wall, etc.)
- Attached decks (regardless of height above grade)
- Free standing decks (greater than 30 inches above adjacent grade)
- Decks with a roof (regardless of height above adjacent grade)
- Garages, pole buildings, sheds or accessory structures (greater than 1000 SF)
- Retaining walls over 48 inches high
- Pools and hot tubs (24 inches and deeper) regardless of style
- Sidewalks or driveways that are 30 inches above adjacent grade
- Sidewalks, driveways or parking areas over a basement or story below
- Electrical service panels (or sub panels)
- Awnings that extend 54 inches or more from the structure
- Electrical services
- Demolition projects. If you would need a permit to build the structure that you plan to demolish – the demolition activity requires a building permit.
- All Commercial buildings, new construction, addition, renovations

Building permits are not required for the following situations:

- Change out of outlets/switches/light fixtures
- Installation of handrails and balusters
- Patching concrete
- Patching walls
- Repairing windows
- Interior door replacement if it's a solid/hollow door (if there is glass in the door it must meet specifications and a permit is required)
- Ceiling track and tile

- Wallpaper, paint, carpet, linoleum, tile (if subfloor installed a permit is needed), molding, or paneling
- Replacement of a section of downspout, gutter or flashing (installation of new does require a permit)
- Re-pointing mortar on bricks in areas where missing/deteriorated
- Retaining walls less than 4' in height
- Concrete patio (floating) (zoning permit only)
- Fences not exceeding 6' in height (zoning permit only)
- Placement of pre-fabricated shed (zoning permit only) (if shed is to be constructed completely, a building permit is required)
- Replacement of faucets, shower spigots, replacement of guts in toilet tank, or replacement of hose bib spigot on exterior of property.

Actual permits required for a particular building are determined on an individual basis. If you are still unsure if a permit is needed, contact the Code Department at 610-374-8273, ext. 238. The applicant is still required to build to the state code regardless if a permit is not required.

All contractors are required to submit a copy of their Certificate of Insurance listing general liability and workers' compensation coverage's with each building permit application. A workers' compensation affidavit must be completed when coverage is not available.

The Permit Process:

1. A **Zoning Permit** is required prior to commencing any type of work including construction, renovation, remodeling or demolition of any type of structure, which creates any type of land use change to your property. By submitting the zoning permit application prior to submitting a building permit application this will help the applicant understand the overall requirements for the project.
2. **Submit Application** – Fill out the appropriate application(s) supplied by the Borough, submit the applications, drawings and specifications for your project. The following are potential permit applications that could be submitted:
 - Zoning Application
 - Building Application (include HVAC & electrical)
 - Plumbing Permit Application

Include the following in your plans:

- Foundation plan for basement or crawl space
- Floor plans for all floors
- Section view showing all framing, supports, sheathing, wall coverings, rafters, roof coverings, attic ventilation, insulation, etc.
- Elevation views from all sides of the structure with finish grades
- Electrical plans for each floor
- Framing plans for each floor (if using manufactured supports, please provide diagrams and calculations from the manufacturer)
- Mechanical diagrams for the structure
- Plumbing drain/waste/vent riser diagram

Do I need an Engineer/Design Professional's seal on my drawings?

- Most residential projects (single family house, accessory structures, and additions) do not require an engineer to prepare the drawings. However, sealed plans are required for any structural aspect of the project that the Building Code Official (BCO) needs additional information. This includes structural changes to existing buildings.
- If any part of your structure is not covered in the codes you will need your plans/specifications signed and sealed by an engineer that is certified in that area.

- All engineered components must be signed and sealed by the Design Professional and it must be labeled specifically for that job.

This permit is only the building permit, other permits may be required based on the scope of work.

3. **Review Process** – At this time your BCO will review your application packet to check compliance with local requirements. The BCO has 15 business days to review the information and respond to residential project submissions. Commercial projects are allocated a 30-day review period to respond to the corresponding submission.
4. **Permit** – Upon the BCO’s approval of your permit application package a permit will be issued. Once you receive your official document construction may begin. The permit must be posted in a conspicuous place facing the main approach to the worksite and shall remain posted until work is finished and approved for use.
5. **Site Inspections** – Onsite inspections are required at different stages during your construction process. The following is a list of potential inspections:
 - **Pre-Construction (if required)**
 - **Footing (pre-concrete pour)**
 - **Foundation (pre-concrete pour)**
 - **Backfill**
 - **Under Slab**
 - **Electrical Service**
 - **Rough Electrical**
 - **Rough Plumbing**
 - **Rough HVAC**
 - **Rough Framing/Masonry**
 - **Insulation/Energy**
 - **Wallboard**
 - **Final**

When scheduling inspections, at least 24 hour notice is requested to allow for appropriate staff scheduling.

When you receive your permit it will be marked with what inspections you will need to complete your construction project. Unsure when to schedule certain inspections, please contact your local BCO.

Please have all specifications for installed equipment/materials available onsite.

Final Approval – When the project is in total compliance with local requirement, the BCO will provide you with appropriate documentation of completion and a Certificate of Occupancy has to be issued before the structure or improvement can be utilized (and considered complete).

Additional Permitting/Occupancy Information

Residential Accessory Structures – (Detached garages, sheds, pole barns) No accessory building or structure shall be permitted within any required front or side yard or within ten feet (10’) of the rear lot line. A Zoning Permit is required for all accessory structures.

Detached Garages – The maximum length of any side of a garage serving a dwelling shall be forty feet (40’). No such garage shall be located within 10’ of a dwelling. Maximum height allowed is 20 feet. No temporary structures are permitted.

Sheds – Storage sheds up to 100 square feet and without a permanent foundation shall be located no closer than two feet (2’) from any rear yard or side yard. Storage sheds up to 100 square feet with

permanent foundations shall be located no closer than five feet (5') from any property line. Setbacks will be determined on an individual basis for your particular zoning district.

Swimming Pools – Permanent pools shall be entirely enclosed with a permanent barrier or fence not less than 4' in height, having no opening greater than 4" with gates that securely lock when not in use. Above ground pools shall have a ladder, which can be removed or rendered unusable, and entrance securely closed.

Demolition – Demolition permits are required for all wrecking projects. In the case of a home, if the house is hooked-up to the public sewer, a plumbing permit is required to cap the sewer.

Inspections

Inspections are required for all permits regulated by the UCC. A twenty-four (24) hour notice is requested for footing, foundation, framing, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, insulation/energy, wallboard, fire protection, accessibility and final. Please call 610-374-8273 ext. 238 to schedule residential inspections. Please contact Systems Design Engineering at 610-916-8522 to schedule commercial inspections.

Plumbing Permit

All new buildings or additions to existing buildings with plumbing systems to be installed require a plumbing permit. Any modifications to water and drain lines also require a permit.

Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors are required in **all** residential occupancies in accordance with the 2009 International Residential Code, Section R314: in each sleeping room; outside each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms; on each additional story of the dwelling, including basements and habitable attics.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Carbon monoxide detectors are required in **all** residential occupancies in accordance with the 2009 International Residential Code, Section R315: in each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms in dwelling units within which fuel-fired appliances are installed and in dwelling units that have attached garages, and where work requiring a permit occurs in existing dwellings.

Occupancy Permits

An occupancy permit is necessary before a home or commercial property is occupied. A final inspection is necessary by the Borough Building Inspector.