

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH DEPARTMENT OF PERMITS AND INSPECTIONS PERMIT REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

Building permits are required to erect, enlarge, alter, remove, demolish, or repair a structure. This includes everything from decks, fireplaces, storage sheds and garages, to commercial construction, alterations and additions.

Building Permits are required for:

- Construction or alteration of a structure (commercial or residential); this includes cutting away any wall, partition, or portion thereof, the removal or cutting of any structural beam, the removal or change of any required means of egress, or rearrangement of parts of the structure affecting the egress requirements.
- Making a change in use group in a commercial building
- Alterations (commercial or residential) including: bay window alterations, converting garage space / screened in porches to living space, foundation repairs, replacing windows or exterior doors IF frames or jams are altered, roofing or siding replacements.
- Construction of an addition including: carports, garages, attached / detached, room additions (commercial or residential), screened in porches.
- Other structures and alterations: chimneys, decks, detached structures (including: gazebos, sheds, storage buildings, trellises, etc. greater than 256 square feet in size), hot tubs / spas (*capable* of holding at least 24 inches of water), pool installations, in-ground and above-ground (*capable* of holding at least 24 inches of water), portable buildings or classrooms, trailers / mobile homes, waterfront construction (i.e. bulkheads, piers, boat lifts, rip rap, etc.).
- Demolition or removal of a structure
- Moving a lot line which affects an existing structure

Electrical Permits are required for:

- Adding or installing new circuits (circuit breakers)
- Changing/Upgrading electrical service
- Installing, replacing or extending electrical wiring (new wiring requires a permit)
- New Electrical Service
- Relocating or replacing a meter base
- Relocating or replacing a panel box, including changing from fuse to breaker panel
- Subfed Panels
- Temporary Poles
- Trailer Services

Elevator Permits are required for:

- Installing Commercial and Residential Elevators
- Installing Commercial and Residential Stair Lifts and Wheel Chair Lifts

MECHANICAL/Fire Prevention Permits are required for:

A permit is required for the installation or alteration of any fire suppression or fire alarm system to include:

- Fire alarm systems (automatic and / or manual)
- Fire hydrants and Fire Department connections on private property
- Fire sprinkler systems
- Fire suppression systems
- Smoke control systems
- Standpipe systems
- Underground fire mains

MECHANICAL/Gas Permits are required for: The installation or replacement of ANY gas lines or gas appliances requires a permit, to include:

- Boilers, furnaces, gas pack units and water heaters
- Conversion from propane to Natural Gas or Natural Gas to propane
- Gas logs, fireplaces
- Gas meter relocations
- Generators
- Pool / hot tub heaters
- Space heaters
- Commercial fryers, grills, ovens, ranges

Exception: Residential gas dryers, grills, ovens and ranges do not require permits; however, gas piping to these appliances always requires a permit.

Mechanical Permits are required for:

Residential (New Installation):

- Heat Pumps (air to air, water to air)
- Furnaces/Boilers (electric, oil)
- Ventilation Systems, Duct Work, HVAC Equipment
- Wood Stoves/Fireplace Inserts

Commercial (New or Replacement):

- Heat Pumps (air to air, water to air)
- Furnaces/Boilers (electric, oil)
- Ventilation Systems, Duct Work, HVAC Equipment

- Wood Stoves/Fireplace Inserts

Plumbing Permits are required for:

Residential

- Connection / conversion to City water or sewer
- New plumbing fixtures or drains
- New or replacement testable backflow preventers
- Replacement of water or sewer lines

Commercial

- New or replacement plumbing fixtures or drains
- New or replacement testable backflow preventers
- On-site water distribution or sewer collector lines
- Replacement of water or sewer lines

Permit Applications must be submitted for the above trade disciplines with the following information:

- If a contractor: Class A, B or C State Contractor's Registration number, company name, contract value, registered Master Tradesman's signature (if applicable), name and phone number of the customer/homeowner/tenant, physical address of the property where the work is being performed, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- If a homeowner: name, address, approximate cost of materials, signature, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- For new, relocated or replaced fixtures, drains, or equipment, indicate the number, size and type of fixtures or equipment; for sinks, also indicate the trap size; for electrical equipment, indicate the number and/or size of fixtures and equipment
- For water or sewer line replacements, indicate as such on the application
- For on-site water or sewer lines, indicate the number of buildings to which the lines are being connected
- For backflow preventers, indicate the number and type installed

Special Permit Requirements: (Tents, Amusement Devices/Rides)

Tents

- Required for tents greater than 900 square feet in size
- Certificate of Flammability
- Contractor's business license (when applicable)

Special amusements- a Special/Amusement inspections permit application filled out with the following information:

1. Physical address where the devices / rides are being installed
2. Customer's / property owner's name
3. Contractor's company name and signature of a designated employee
4. Number of devices / rides being installed
5. Contractor's proof of insurance
6. List and description of all devices / rides with serial numbers and manufacturers' names
7. Contractor's business license (when applicable)

Frequently asked questions

How long is a Permit Valid?

A permit is valid for 6 months from the date it was issued. Any permit that requires multiple inspections (i.e. new construction, building addition, etc.) is automatically renewed for 6 months after each inspection. If more time is needed to complete work on a permit, an extension may be requested by writing to the Department of Permits and Inspections.

When is a Permit NOT required?

A permit is not required, however, compliance with the Code is required, for the following:

- Installation of wiring and equipment which operates at less than 50 volts (commercial installation: provided it is not located in a non-combustible plenum or penetrating a fire wall)
- Construction of detached sheds less than 256 square feet of building area **(All sheds are required to be anchored down and meet zoning setback requirements)**
- Swing sets
- Tents and air-supported structures that cover an area of 900 square feet or less
- Fences
- **Roofing or siding** work done on single family homes, duplexes, or townhomes outside the flood zone or designated historic districts
- Ordinary repairs

- Fire protection: ordinary repairs or direct replacement of minor components with like equipment
(A report of repair or replacement is required to be kept on the premises and available for inspection upon request)

Like-for Like Replacement of:

- Residential plumbing and electrical fixtures, fixture fittings, or appliances
(Including electrical water heaters)
- Residential fans, humidifiers, air cleaners and similar mechanical equipment
- Windows and doors with those of similar capacity in the same location in one and two family dwellings, townhouses, and the like **except in the historic districts.**

Who should obtain the Permit, the Property Owner or Contractor?

Residential:

If a contractor is performing the work on a property, it is highly recommended that the contractor obtain the permit. Whoever obtains the permit is responsible for all work performed under that permit, and is responsible to schedule all required inspections. If a homeowner obtains a permit for work done by a contractor, a "Homeowner's Affidavit" must be completed and notarized prior to permit issuance.

If property owners are performing the work by themselves, or with assistance, then they are responsible for obtaining the permit and scheduling all required inspections.

Property owners may obtain the building permit to construct a new house for their own occupancy. However, only one (1) house may be built by that property owner in a 24-month period. A State Contractor's License is required to build more than one house in a 24-month period.

Commercial:

A registered contractor is required to perform all work on a commercial property, and is required to obtain the permit and schedule all required inspections. In some cases, a property owner or tenant may be allowed to obtain the permit if approved by the Department of Permits and Inspections.

How does a Contractor register with the Department of Permits and Inspections in order to obtain Permits?

- Provide a copy of the Class A, B or C State Contractor's License
- Provide a copy of the Master Tradesman cards for everyone in the company who is authorized to sign permit applications as a Master for that trade
- Provide a copy of a Business License.

If the company is based in Portsmouth, a Portsmouth Business License is required. If the company is based outside of Portsmouth, permits may be obtained if there is a business license for another Virginia municipality (i.e. Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Fairfax, Richmond, Chesapeake, etc.); however, if more than \$25,000 worth of business is conducted in Portsmouth in a calendar year, a Portsmouth Business License is required.

The company name is required to be listed the same on both the business license and State Contractor's License (i.e. on business license listed as: ABC Inc. and on State license listed as: ABC Inc. trading as XYZ Inc.)

A State Contractor's License has limitations on contract values:

Contract Value Per Job	Total Business in One Calendar Year	
Class A:	Unlimited	Unlimited
Class B:	\$70,000	\$500,000
Class C:	\$10,000	\$150,000

Additionally, permits may only be obtained for those classifications which are listed on the State Contractor's License AND for which the company has a Master Tradesman (if applicable).

Various Classifications, which are needed to Obtain Permits, (Those in *italics* must be on Contractor's License AND Tradesman License)

BLD	Building	HIC	Home Improvement
CIC	Commercial Improvement	HVA	<i>AC/Mechanical</i>
EEC	<i>Elevator/Escalator</i>	ISC	Landscape Irrigation
ELE	<i>Electrical</i>	MCC	Marine Facility
FSP	Fire Suppression	PLB	<i>Plumbing</i>
GFC	<i>Gas Fitting</i>	REF	<i>Refrigeration</i>
H/H	Highway/Heavy	SPR	Fire Sprinkler

Exceptions:

If only performing small repairs and similar jobs with contract values less than \$1,000.00 (labor AND materials), permits may be obtained with the following information...

- Copies of the Tradesman cards for those individuals in the company that are authorized to sign permit applications.
- A copy of a signed contract with the customer showing that they are being charged less than \$1,000.00; this does not have to be a formal document (a receipt from an invoice pad meeting these requirements is sufficient)
- A copy of the city Business License
- A copy of the \$5000 bond approved by the City Attorney

A State Contractor's License is renewed every 2 years, and a City Business License is renewed each year. When receiving these updated licenses, copies should be provided to the Department of Permits and Inspections so that all records are current. This will help prevent possible delays when submitting applications for permits.

What Information is required to obtain a Demolition Permit?**Residential Demolition:**

- A copy of the site plan or physical survey of the property
- Letters or notices from all utilities stating the services have been cut off, including, but not limited to: Public Utilities (City water) even if the property is on well water, Dominion Virginia Power Co., Cox Cable, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Verizon telephone.
- If the property is to be re-developed as a commercial property, and if the building was built prior to 1985, a letter of asbestos inspection conducted by a certified asbestos abatement company is required.

Commercial Demolition:

- A copy of the site plan or physical survey of the property
- Letters or notices from all utilities stating the services have been cut off, including, but not limited to: Public Utilities (City water) even if the property is on well water, Dominion Virginia Power Co., Cox Cable, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Verizon telephone
- If the building was built prior to 1985, a letter of asbestos inspection conducted by a certified asbestos abatement company is required.

What Information is required for Review of Commercial Building Plans?

***Allow 3 weeks for plan review!!**

- A cover letter with contact person's name, address, phone and fax number (This will be the person to whom all correspondence will be sent.)
- 2 copies of the complete signed and sealed architectural plans, structural plans and material specifications of all work

In Addition, the following specifications, drawings and details should be submitted:

A site plan including the following information:

- Size and location of all new construction and all existing structures on the site
- Distances from lot lines
- Established street grades and proposed finished grades

Architectural plans and specifications to include:

- Description of uses and the proposed use group(s) for all portions of the building
- The design approach for mixed-uses (as applicable)
- Proposed type of construction of the building
- Fully dimensioned drawings to determine areas and building height
- Accurate details and dimensions to evaluate means of egress, including occupant loads for each floor, exit arrangement and sizes, corridors, stairs, doors, etc.
- Exit signs / means of egress lighting, including power supply
- Accessibility provisions
- Description and details of proposed special occupancies, such as a covered mall, high-rise, mezzanine, atrium, public garage, etc.
- Accurate details to evaluate fire-resistive construction requirements, including data substantiating required ratings
- Details of plastic, insulation and safety glazing installation
- Details of required fire protection systems

Structural plans, specifications and engineering details to include:

- Soils report indicating the soil type and recommended allowable bearing pressure and foundation type to comply with the City Expansive Soils Policy
- Local design load criteria, including frost depth
- Wind load design criteria and exposure
- Details of foundations and superstructure
- Provisions for required special inspections

Applicable construction standards and material specifications (i.e. masonry, concrete, wood, steel, etc.)

What Information is required for review of new house plans and issuance of the permit?

*Most house plans can be reviewed the same day submitted, time permitting.

- 2 copies of the site plan which have been approved for location of construction by the Zoning, Planning, and Engineering Divisions
- Two sets of building construction plans **(see plan submittal checklist)**
- A building permit application completed with the following information: General contractor's State Registration number, company name, business address, phone number and signature of a designated employee (if general contractor is obtaining the permit)
- Property owner's name, current address, phone number and signature (if owner is obtaining the permit)
- Physical address of the new house
- Cost of construction for the house minus the land costs
- Size of the house in square feet with the living area listed separately from the non-living area (i.e. porches, decks, garages, etc.)
- Mechanic's Lien Agent (MLA) full name, address and phone number (if applicable)
- Soils report indicating the soil type and recommended allowable bearing pressure and foundation type to comply with the City Expansive Soils Policy

Various Building Permits will also require the following information:

Residential Additions and Accessories:

- 1. Includes room additions, decks, gazebos, screened-in porches, garages, carports, sheds and storage buildings (256 square feet or larger)**
 - 1 copy of the site plan or physical survey, which has been approved for location of construction by the Zoning, Planning, and Engineering Divisions.
 - Dimensioned floor, foundation, and elevation drawings as well as a wall section **(see plan submittal checklist)**
 - Description of materials being used (i.e. 2 x 6's, 2 x 8's, etc.)
- 2. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:**

- If a building contractor: Class A, B or C State Contractor's Registration number, contract value for the building portion of the work, name of company, signature of a designated employee, name and phone number of customer, physical address of the house, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- If a homeowner: name, address, approximate cost of materials, signature, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- Size of the addition or new structure in square feet with living area listed separately from non-living area (i.e. porches, decks, garages, etc.)
- Mechanic's Lien Agent (MLA) full name, address and phone number (if applicable)

Residential Alteration:

- Dimensioned floor plan and a wall section
- Description of materials being used (i.e. 2 x 6's, 2 x 8's, etc.)

1. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:

- If a building contractor: Class A, B or C State Contractor's Registration number, contract value for the building portion of the work, company name, signature of a designated employee, name and phone number of customer, physical address of the house, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- If a homeowner: name, address, approximate cost of materials, signature, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- Mechanic's Lien Agent (MLA) full name, address and phone number (if applicable)

2. The following requires additional information:

- For constructing, relocating, removing or altering a wall or other structural member
- Dimensioned floor, and foundation, drawings as well as a wall section
- Description of materials being used (i.e. 2 x 6's, 2 x 8's, etc.)

3. For other alterations (i.e. siding, roofing, etc.)

- If a building contractor: total contract value
- If a homeowner: approximate cost of materials
- Additionally, an **asbestos exemption form filled out completely** with property owner's name and address, and signature of contractor's representative (if contractor doing work) or property owner's signature (if owner doing work)

Pools, Hot Tubs and Spas:

1. New Residential Pool Construction

- 1 copy of the site plan or physical survey which has been approved for location of pool or hot tub by the Zoning, Planning, and Engineering Divisions

a. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:

- If a building contractor: Class A, B or C State Contractor's Registration number, total contract value for the pool or hot tub and installation, company name, signature of a designated employee, name and phone number of customer, physical address of the house, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number
- If a homeowner: name, address, approximate cost of pool or hot tub, signature and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number

3. New Commercial Pool Construction:

- 2 copies of the site plan which has been approved for location of the construction and business use by the Zoning, Planning, and Engineering Divisions
- Health Department approval

a. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:

- General contractor's State Registration number, company name, address and phone number, name of customer / customer's business, and signature of a designated employee (if general contractor is obtaining the permit)
- Property owner's name, current address, phone number and signature (if owner is obtaining the permit)
- Physical address of the new building, including suite numbers (as designated by the property owner, when applicable).
- Cost of construction for the building minus the land costs
- Size of the structure in square feet
- Construction type(s) and use group(s)

New Commercial Building or Addition Permits:

- 2 copies of the site plan which has been approved for location of the construction and business use by the Zoning Office, Planning, and Engineering Divisions

- Health Department approval, if applicable (i.e. restaurants, hair salons, etc.)
- If the building was constructed prior to 1985, a letter of asbestos certification by a registered asbestos abatement company

1. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:

- General contractor's Class A, B or C State Registration number, company name, address and phone number, name of customer / customer's business, signature of a designated employee, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number (if general contractor is obtaining the permit)
- Property owner's name, current address, phone number, signature, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number (if owner is obtaining the permit)
- Physical address of the new building, including 3-digit suite numbers (as designated by the property owner, when applicable)
- Cost of construction minus the electrical, fire, gas, mechanical and plumbing costs
- Size of the structure in square feet
- Construction type(s) and use group(s)

Commercial Alteration:

- Floor plan including wall sections, egress signs and distances
- Health Department approval, if applicable (i.e. for restaurants, hair salons, etc.)
- Approval from the Zoning Division for the business use at that location
- If the building was constructed prior to 1985, a letter of asbestos certification by a registered asbestos abatement company

1. A Building Permit Application completed with the following information:

- General contractor's Class A, B or C State Registration number, company name, address and phone number, name of customer / customer's business, signature of a designated employee, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number (if general contractor is obtaining the permit)
- Property owner's name, current address, phone number, signature, and if there is another associated permit at the same address, that permit number (if owner is obtaining the permit)
- Physical address of the new building, **including suite numbers (as designated by the property owner, when applicable)**
- Cost of construction
- Construction type(s) and use group(s)

