



WHEN DO I NEED A PERMIT?

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

CITY OF LAS VEGAS BUILDING DEPARTMENT

THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED TO BE A GUIDE FOR THOSE HOMEOWNER'S INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THEIR HOMES TO DETERMINE IF A BUILDING PERMIT IS NEEDED FOR THE WORK THEY INTEND TO PERFORM. IT IS A GUIDE ONLY AND IS NOT ALL INCLUSIVE. FOR MORE ACCURATE INFORMATION A HOMEOWNER SHOULD CONTACT THEIR LOCAL BUILDING DEPARTMENT.

HOMEOWNERS AND PERMITS – WHY SHOULD I GET PERMITS?

Your home is typically the largest personal financial investment you will make. Building permits and inspections help you to protect that investment by providing a reasonable assurance that a home is safe from structural failure, fire hazards, electrical hazards, and health risks.

1. Permits provide a permanent record of the work performed and inspections conducted on the home for insurance needs, resale value, and general knowledge of the history of the home. If you improve or add-on to your home without permits and it fails, your insurance company may not help you with the liability.
2. Permits and inspections help to assure a level of work that is “code compliant” on your home resulting in a confidence level of safety and lasting construction avoiding big problems in the future during the life of your home.
3. Work performed without permits can become frustrating and extremely costly, and in some cases even deadly. Work that has been completed without a permit and discovered at a later date can require an engineering evaluation and report, possible destructive testing, removal of wall coverings, and replacement plumbing, electrical or other various elements of the un-permitted construction at great cost and irritation to the homeowner or subsequent homeowner. There are documented cases of occupant deaths in fires involving un-permitted projects such as garage conversions because codes were not complied with and required proper ventilation and emergency egress were not provided.

Simply put, protect yourself, your family and your investment in your home by obtaining permits and inspections on home improvements, additions, and/or any other work requiring a permit.

HOMEOWNERS AND PERMITS- WHEN DO I NEED A PERMIT?

Generally speaking, the following guidelines should be used to determine when a permit is required however, to be certain, it is always best to contact your local building department. Staff at the City of Las Vegas Building & Safety Department located at 495 S Main Street, 1st Floor, is available to answer any question you may have Mondays through Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You may also contact Building & Safety staff during those same hours by calling 702-229-6251.

All our plans and permits are electronically submitted online with a login at:

LasVegasNevada.gov/Dashboard

A simple general rule for when a permit is required is:

1. If you *add to* the structure or add a *new* structure;
2. If you affect the “envelope” of the structure or plainly, if you open up the interior or exterior walls of the structure;
3. For other than routine maintenance and service, if you work on or add to the building’s mechanical, electrical, or plumbing systems.
4. If you reconfigure any existing room, garage, patio, balcony, etc. into something new. For example, add a loft or enclose an existing loft, convert a garage into habitable space, etc.

The following offers a little more detail for when permits are required by type of permit but again this is not all inclusive:

Building Improvements

A permit is required to:

1. Add a room;
2. Build, demolish, or move a carport, garage, or shed of 200 square feet or larger;
3. Finish an attic, garage, or basement to make additional living space;
4. Cut in a new window or door opening, or widen existing openings;
5. Move, remove, or add walls;
6. Apply new roofing where all of the old roofing is removed or new sheathing is installed. Also, when tile roofing is installed in lieu of, or over, an existing roof covering; (***please note***: there may be special conditions that need to be met for re-roof projects)
7. Build a stairway;
8. Build a retaining wall more than 30 inches high;
9. Build a deck more than 30 inches above grade;
10. Build a patio or enclose an existing patio;
11. Build a block wall more than 30 inches high or a fence (ornamental iron or wood) over 7 feet high;
12. Add additional courses to an existing block wall. A permit is not required to add a single course to an existing block wall provided the overall height of the wall with the additional course does not exceed the maximum allowable height specified in Title 19 (Development Code) of the Las Vegas Municipal Code.

Electrical Improvements

A permit is required to:

1. Install or alter any permanent wiring or electrical device;
2. Run additional wiring to put in an electrical outlet or light fixture;
3. Change out, upgrade, or relocate the existing main electrical panel;
4. Install a photovoltaic (solar) system.

Plumbing Improvements

A permit is required to:

1. Install or replace a water heater or water softener;
2. Alter piping inside a wall, ceiling or beneath a floor;
3. Emergency repair, alteration, or replacement of damaged or leaking concealed piping.
4. Remodel or add on to your home when existing plumbing is to be relocated. This includes installation of building sewers, water service, and exterior drains;
5. Install, alter or repair gas piping between the meter and any appliance (indoors or outdoors) i.e. gas line for a BBQ, add a fire pit, pool heater, etc.;
6. Install a solar hot water system.

Mechanical Improvements

A permit is required to:

1. Install or change any part of a heating or cooling system;
2. Install or change any part of an unvented decorative appliances;
3. Install bathroom fans, dryer exhausts, kitchen range exhausts, and appliances that are required to be vented.

Again, this list is not all inclusive—it is a guide intended to help give you an understanding of the types of improvements or construction projects you may wish to perform on your home that would require a permit. **Always check with you local building department before proceeding.**

HOMEOWNERS AND PERMITS – WHAT CAN I DO WITHOUT A PERMIT?

There are numerous things you can do to your house that do not require permits. Permits are NOT required for the following:

Building Improvements

1. Non-habitable one-story detached accessory structures (storage structures, playhouses, etc.) provided the floor area does not exceed 200 square feet, provided there are no electrical, plumbing or mechanical improvements or additions; This exemption does not eliminate applicable zoning codes requirements. Call the Planning Department at (702) 229-6301 for zoning questions.
2. Fences (ornamental iron or wood) not over 7 feet high except for those fences within the front setback of a single-family dwelling and those that are not a part of a pool or spa barrier.
3. Any wall, including a retaining wall, that is not over 30 inches in height, measured from the low finished grade to the grade on the opposite side. This exemption does not apply to:
 - a. Any wall that supports a surcharge;
 - b. Any wall that retains flammable liquids; or
 - c. Any wall of combined materials that exceeds 30 inches in height.
4. Private concrete sidewalks, slabs, and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not over any basement or story below; an offsite permit is needed if the ANY portion of the driveway is in the public right-of-way;
5. Painting, papering, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work, floor covering, except for trim and decorative work; Installation of insulation on existing single-family residences where other permits are not required
6. Portable spas, accessory to a single family residence with all heating and circulating equipment integral to the manufacturing product and entirely above the adjacent grade;
7. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a one- or two-family dwelling;
8. Gutters and downspouts;
9. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall of a one-family or two-family dwelling, or an accessory structure, when projecting not more than 54 inches.
10. Replacement of exterior or interior doors, hinges, hardware and decorative trim related to such doors, provided the following conditions are met:
 - a. The replacement door is of the same size and type.
 - b. The replacement door does not require any modification to existing wall framing.
 - c. The existing door is not a component of a fire-resistive rated construction element.

11. Replacement of exterior or interior window glazing, provided the following conditions are met:
 - a. The replacement window glazing is of the same size and type and thickness.
 - b. The replacement window does not require any modification to existing wall framing.
 - c. The existing glazing is not a component of a fire-resistive rated construction element.
12. Replacement of roof covering materials, other than tile roofing, provided no structural components are repaired or replaced and provided no more than 64 square feet of roof sheathing is replaced.
13. Repair of less than 32 square feet of stone or brick veneer when the damage is less than 6 feet above adjacent grade.
14. Minor repair of interior or exterior stucco/lath/drywall, provided:
 - a. No framing needs replacement or repair; and
 - b. For stucco, the repaired area not exceed 32 square feet in area; and
 - c. The area of repair is not a fire-resistance rated assembly comprised of more than one layer of drywall on each side or any special material(s) necessary to maintain the required fire-resistance rating of the assembly (i.e. fire-stopping of penetrations.)
15. Repair of block walls 6 feet in height or less and the repair is no greater in length than 20 linear feet, provided there is no damage to existing footing.
16. Travel trailers and recreational vehicles, or other axled vehicles as permitted or licensed by the State of Nevada.

Electrical Improvements

1. To remove and replace broken or damaged electrical outlets (like for like only). However, permits are required to install, upgrade or change outlets for decorative purposes. If a GFCI protected outlet is required by code, a permit is required;
2. To replace defective breakers (like for like only);
3. To replace light bulbs and fluorescent tubes;
4. To replace an existing garbage disposal, dishwasher, or similar appliance of 30 amps or less;
5. To install low voltage wiring for garage door openers, cable TV, or burglar alarms;
6. To install phone outlets (wire must be listed type wire);
7. To install CATV – Community Access TV (wire must be listed type wire);
8. To replace an existing door bell.
9. Power-limited wiring of 50 volts or less in or associated with single-family dwellings.

Plumbing Improvements

1. Repair/replace a sink;
2. Repair/replace a toilet;
3. Repair/replace a faucet (if not concealed in a wall);
4. Resurfacing Shower walls;
5. Repair/replace Shower heads;
6. Repair/replace Rain Gutters and Downspouts;
7. Add to or alter an irrigation system with an approved back flow device;
8. Install a water filter;
9. Replace a hose bibb;
10. Install a fountain or other water feature that is filled by a hose 18 inches in depth or less;
11. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves, or fixtures, or for the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of concealed piping.
12. Replacement of plumbing fixtures in the same location with a similar fixture and materials provided no work is done other than the replacement of the fixture, the tail piece and/or the trap and provided the work does not penetrate fire-resistive rated construction, including a fire-resistive rated concrete slab.

Mechanical (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) Improvements

1. Portable heating appliances, cooking or clothes drying 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 mechanical or plumbing code;
5. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe;
6. Portable evaporative coolers installed in windows; installation within a wall opening created for such will require a permit.
7. Portable appliances, such as freezers, washing machines, refrigerators, portable barbecue grill, etc.;
8. Change out furnace filters.

We cannot over-emphasize the need to check with your local building department regarding which activities require a permit and which do not.

Once you have determined that you need a permit, please contact the Building & Safety Department or a Licensed Contractor for help in completing the next steps and process in obtaining a permit. You may contact the City of Las Vegas Building and Safety Department at a 702-229-6251 or online at www.lasvegasnevada.gov/BuildingPermits.

HOMEOWNERS AND PERMITS – WHAT IF I’M A “DO IT YOURSELF” PERSON?

Do It Smart, Do it Safely.

If you are considering a 'Do-It-Yourself' home improvement project, it is important that you find out if permits are required for your project and inquire about the applicable zoning and building requirements. Before beginning your project, be certain your home updates are possible and legal.

Things to consider before you begin a project:

- A building permit ensures that a certified inspector will examine the project to determine if the work is done safely and according to code. For do-it-yourselfers who don't do installations or construction work every day, this is particularly valuable as it will give you the opportunity to ask questions of an expert in the field. Incorrect building or remodeling work can cause house fires, flood damage and structural problems.
- If a permit is required, don't proceed with work without it. You could be putting your home and family in jeopardy and setting the stage for costly repairs down the line. In addition, you may be subject to investigation fees for commencing work without the required permits.
- **Be realistic about your skill level. Never take on a project that you will not be able to accomplish.**
- If you are doing the work yourself, call your local or county building department. Getting a permit is often as simple as downloading a form and sending it in with the fee. However, more complex projects such as new construction for room additions or conversions may require detailed construction plans that may tax your skill level.
- If working with a licensed contractor, be sure to use their expertise and familiarity with the permitting process. In addition, make sure your contract clearly specifies who (you or your contractor) is responsible for obtaining required permits and inspection approvals.
- **Check a contractor's license with the State of Nevada Contractor’s Board (702-486 – 1100) to ensure that a contractor is legally licensed and bonded to work in Nevada. Beware of a contractor willing to work without permits. INSIST ON PERMITS.**
- Use or insist that the contractor uses only licensed plumbers and electricians. Along with homeowners working on their own homes, only licensed plumbers and electricians are legally allowed to do plumbing or electrical work in Nevada.
- The City of Las Vegas Building and Safety Department has personnel and resources to help you through the permit and inspection process. Do not hesitate to avail yourself of that expertise and resources.
- Always get copies of permits and inspections for your records.

Nevada State Law, NRS 624.031. Allows that work performed by a homeowner who is building or improving a residential structure for their own occupancy and not intended for sale or lease is exempt from State provisions requiring all work to be performed by a State of Nevada Licensed Contractor. This provision applies mainly to owners of single family homes and does not apply to Condominiums, apartments, etc. The sale or lease of the property within 1 year of completion of the work creates a rebuttable presumption upon the owner/builder intent of the exemption and is subject to investigation and action by the State of Nevada Contractor's Board. It is strongly recommended that whenever possible, properly licensed and trained professional contractors perform the work on all construction projects.

We are here ready to serve you. To help you achieve your construction project goals in a code compliant manner as you build your part of the community to make life better. Our objective is to help ensure the minimum level of safety and quality of work afforded by the technical building codes is attained in your project. We hope to see you soon.

Website shortcuts:

- Information on building permits, go to our web page: LasVegasNevada.gov/BuildingPermits
- To check for permits on an address or parcel and to see the status of plan reviews and inspections, go to LasVegasNevada.gov/CheckStatus
- To submit plans for review, go to LasVegasNevada.gov/Dashboard
- To schedule an inspection, go to LasVegasNevada.gov/ScheduleInspection
- To pay for plan review or permit fees, go to LasVegasNevada.gov/PayPermit
- For forms and requirements: <http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/BuildingForms>
- To submit a records request, go to LasVegasNevada.gov/RecordsRequest