



WALLA WALLA COUNTY

Community Development Department

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GUIDE TO THE PERMIT PROCESS

Construction projects are subject to building codes and zoning ordinances. The purpose of regulating building codes is to provide minimum standards to safeguard life and limb, health, property and public welfare by regulating and controlling design, construction and the quality of materials.

Zoning ordinances promote public health, safety, and general welfare by encouraging the most appropriate use of the land, protecting social and economic stability, and assuring orderly development.

The Zoning Ordinance of Walla Walla County (WWCC Title 17) is the source for zoning regulations. The ordinance regulates residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural development within Walla Walla County. In an attempt to maintain the design and character of your neighborhood, the codes impose certain regulations about where you can build on your property and how big your house may be. The codes contain provisions and limitations on proposed development, such as:

- Building setbacks from easements and property lines
- Maximum lot coverage requirements
- Height limitations of structures
- Permitted uses in each zone
- Flood plain and flood hazard areas
- Shoreline permits
- Variances
- Special property use permits

Although building permits are not required for some projects, planning staff approval may be necessary. **Please contact the Planning staff at 509-524-2610 for the specific provisions of your property.**

What work requires a permit?

The 2006 International Codes require that prior to construction, a permit be obtained for all building, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical work, including alterations, conversions, interior remodeling work, or demolitions.

Electrical permits are issued through the state Department of Labor & Industries at 1-800-547-9411.

No building or structure shall be erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, converted or demolished unless a construction permit has first been obtained from the Community Development Department. Swimming pools require site plan approval and a flat permit fee.

Why get a permit?

There are several advantages to doing home improvement projects with a building permit. The primary one is that getting a permit brings you the services of the building inspector. The inspector approves each phase of the construction process, checking to see that work is done safely and properly. Inspectors also can advise you on how to proceed if you get stuck.

Secondly, there are legal and financial liabilities that you face when you do not get a permit. Work without a permit is illegal and could pose serious complications for you when you try to sell your house. If there is a fire in your house, your insurance company may use the illegal work as an excuse not to pay on your claim.

Building without a permit may result in added cost, and even an order to stop construction until the proper permits have been obtained.

Work exempt from a permit

A building permit shall *not* be required for the following:

- One-story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
- Fences not over 6 feet high.
- Retaining walls that are not over four feet high (48") measured from the bottom of footing to top of wall.
- Sidewalks and driveways.
- Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
- Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep
- Swings and other playground equipment.
- Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

Fees

Building permit fees are payable when the permit is ready to issue. The fees are based on the valuation of the work proposed, computed on the cost per square foot for the type of construction intended. A plan check fee is assessed for 65% of the building permit fee or 35% for detached Ag or non-commercial utility buildings.

Plan Preparation

Proper preparation of plans is the key to a successful project. It is also the key to obtaining a permit without unnecessary delays. Make certain that your plans clearly indicate **what** you are going to do **where** you are going to do it, and **how** you propose to do it.

If you are doing a simple project, you may be able to do all the drawings yourself. A project that involves no new construction may need only one or two drawings, called floor plans, showing the house as it is now and what it will look like when you are all through. For construction outside the existing walls of your home (a room addition), you will need several drawings (foundation plan, structural sections, exterior elevation) in addition to the floor plans and site plan.

Submittal Requirements

A completed building permit application, with a site plan and two complete sets of construction plans/working drawings must include the following:

- ❑ A site plan that accurately describes the dimensions of the property, location of all existing and proposed buildings and their setbacks, adjoining roads and easements, access to the property and driveways, parking areas, fencing, unique topographical features or conditions and other information that will illustrate your proposal. The site plan can be 11" x 17" or smaller and be reproducible on a photocopy machine. Site plans must be drawn to scale, e.g. 1" = 30 ft.
- ❑ Two sets of scale drawings to illustrate proposed construction shall include:
 - Floor plan
 - Foundation plan
 - Framing plan (all floors)
 - Roof framing plan / truss specs.
 - Exterior elevations
 - Typical wall sections
 - Structural engineering calculations, when required by the building official

Some projects require approval from other agencies prior to permit issuance, e.g. the Health Department and Public Works. The approval of plans and issuance of permits is not to be construed as permission to build contrary to the state building codes or county codes and ordinances, even though a violation may have been overlooked when the plans were checked.

Over-the-counter issuance may be performed on minor projects such as re-roofs, siding, windows, mechanical and plumbing permits.

Changes to plans

Changes in plans arising after plans have been checked and approved require approval by the building inspector. This may be done over-the-counter or may require re-submission of revised plans, depending on the complexity of the changes. Additional fees may be assessed for changes that result in increases in square footage or additional plan review. Minor changes that do not involve structural changes or additions may be approved without plan revision at the discretion of the building inspector.

Expiration of plan reviews

Plan reviews expire by limitation in 180 days from the date of the review unless an extension is requested and granted by the building inspector. Therefore, allow ample time for processing your plans but do not submit them prematurely.

Permit issuance

Building permit fees are paid at the time of permit issuance. When your building permit is issued, you will receive a copy of your approved plans, fee receipt, and inspection record card. The plans and inspection record card must be available for the inspector's use when he performs an inspection.

Permit expiration

Building code provisions require that work be continued if a building permit is to remain valid. During any 180-day period, if some reasonable amount of work is not accomplished, your permit will automatically expire. The building inspector may grant extensions before expiration takes place.

Inspection stages

County building regulations require that certain inspections be made before concealment. As you complete particular sections of your construction, e.g. the plumbing, you must call and request an

inspection before proceeding to the next phase of building.

Typical inspection stages are as follows:

1. **FOOTING / FOUNDATION** – when forms are in place and prior to placement of concrete for footings. (Blocking for a manufactured home is required to be inspected prior to the installation of skirting.)
2. **PLUMBING** – after rough-in, before covering, and final.
3. **MECHANICAL** – rough-in of piping, before covering, metal chimneys before concealment and final.
4. **UNDER FLOOR / UNDER SLAB** – after all in slab or under floor accessories or equipment is in place, and before concrete or floor sheathing is in place.
5. **FRAMING** – after all framing, bracing and blocking are in place, prior to concealing, and after all plumbing, mechanical, etc., are installed.
6. **INSULATION** – when insulation is in place with vapor barrier installed.
7. **SHEETROCK** – after all lathing and gypsum board is in place, but before plastering or joint taping.
8. **FINAL** – when complete and prior to occupancy and / or use.

The inspection process

When an inspection is requested, the following information must be provided:

- The owner's name
- The permit number (shown on your inspection record card)
- The site address
- The type of inspection
- A telephone number and contact person

Inspections may be requested in-person or by telephone by calling the 24-hour inspection request line at 509-524-2632. Inspections must be requested by 3:30 p.m. for the following day's schedule. Because each inspector arranges his own schedule to make the best use of his field time, no specific appointment times can be granted unless the inspection is for approval to pour concrete.

Upon inspection, the plans must be available for the inspector to make comparisons with the work performed and the approved plans. The inspection record card must also be accessible for his signature.

If there are corrections to be made before approval, the inspector will leave an "inspection notice" outlining briefly the items to be completed before approval. When corrections have been accomplished, a re-inspection should be scheduled.

When the inspector comes out to look over what you have just completed, be prepared

to ask questions about your next phase of construction. That way you can avoid any problems with your next inspection.

Final approval

After the building inspector makes his inspections and all requirements have been satisfied, your project will be approved and a Certificate of Occupancy granted.

Other Information and Telephone Numbers

Walla Walla County

509-524-2560	Assessor's Office (Tax parcel number information)
509-524-2549	Auditor's Office (Vault/Recorded plats)
509-524-3226	Burn Control Permits (Air Quality & Fire Safety)
509-524-2610	Community Development (Planning staff -- zoning and land use; Building and inspection services)
509-524-2662	Health Department (On-site sewage (septic) system and water availability -- for Touchet Sewer, call 394-2439 / 394-2388)
509-524-2710	Public Works (Roads, GIS Mapping, Address permits, Access permits)

Washington State

509-527-4546	Department of Ecology (Bill Neve, Watermaster)
800-547-9411	Department of Labor and Industries (Electrical permits, Factory Assembled Housing/MH Alteration permits, Contractor registration)
509-577-1633	Department of Transportation (Access off state highway)

Other

800-424-5555	Call Before You Dig
509-525-0510	City of College Place
509-849-2262	City of Prescott
509-337-6371	City of Waitsburg
509-527-4386	City of Walla Walla (Utilities)
509-527-4535	City of Walla Walla (Planning)

This brochure contains general information only and is subject to periodic change. Contact Community Development for specific details regarding current information.

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