

## **Building Department Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

This page does not attempt to answer technical questions that may arise during the design and construction of a building; however, it does answer many of the general questions that are asked each day.

### **1. Why do we need Building Codes?**

The State of Washington enacted the building code in order to provide for community safety. The State requires local governments to provide enforcement of all building codes, including plan reviews and site inspections. The purpose of the State Building Code is to provide standards to safeguard life, health, property and public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, construction, quality of materials, use and occupancy, location and maintenance of all buildings and structures.

### **2. Why do I need a building Permit?**

The purpose of the building permit is to ensure that a proposed project meets the minimum requirements of the adopted International Codes, State Amendments and the City of Langley Municipal Code and Zoning Code.

### **2. When do I need a permit?**

A permit is required in the following instances.

- I. To build a house or other building.
- II. To make interior or exterior improvements, alterations, or additions to any building or structure such as; installing new windows, doors or other openings, moving or removing walls.
- III. To make mechanical or plumbing installations or alterations such as; installing or re-installing a new stove, furnace, tub, shower, dishwasher, water heaters, etc. The addition of gas piping or appliances, etc.
- IV. To construct or locate detached sheds, playhouses or utility buildings

over 200 square feet in size. To construct decks, patio covers, screened rooms and sunrooms.

V. For solar heating systems, spas, swimming pools and re-roofs

In brief, you need a permit for most work to your property. When in doubt, please call the building department at 360-221-4246 ext 17 for assistance.

**REMEMBER:**

A building permit is required before any construction or work begins.

**3. Who applies for the Permit?**

If you are undertaking a do-it-yourself project, then you apply for the required permit(s). If you are hiring the work done, you have the option of having the contractor get the permit or you can get it yourself.

**4. What should my plans include?**

Refer to the *RESIDENTIAL SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST* for the requirements for single-family residences, duplexes and accessory structures.

Refer to the *COMMERCIAL AND MULTI-FAMILY SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST* for the requirements for Commercial and Multi-Family projects (more than two dwelling units).

**5. Do I need to hire an architect or designer to get a permit?**

The homeowner can prepare the plans for most small projects, additions, garages and remodels, and even some new construction. Larger and more complex projects may require that you hire a designer or architect to prepare the construction drawings. Drawings must be to scale and provide the information necessary to review the project for compliance. Refer to the residential submittal requirements checklist.

## **6. Do I need to have my plans engineered?**

Engineering calculations are required for buildings that do not meet the prescriptive requirements for lateral bracing, buildings of other than conventional wood frame construction, buildings of unusual shape, or buildings with complex supporting system, such as pilings or steel frames. Additionally engineering may be required for structures built on fill or on steep sloped sites.

## **7. Do I have to hire a contractor to get a permit? Can I act as my own contractor?**

Owner-builder is basically a situation in which the homeowner becomes the general contractor. As an owner-builder you, not the person that you hire assume all responsibility for the overall job, which may include such things as State and federal taxes, workers compensation and other legal liabilities. Unless you are very experienced in construction, it may be best to hire a licensed contractor. State law requires all contractors and subcontractors be licensed. All contractors and subcontractors doing work in the City of Langley must have a City Contractors License in addition to meeting the state licensing requirements.

## **8. Where do I go to apply for a Permit?**

Permit applications can be submitted to the Building Department located at 112 Second Street. Please contact the Building Department (360) 221-4246 for an appointment to submit your project.

## **9. How long is my permit valid?**

Your permit will be valid provided you begin construction within 180 days, do not suspend construction for more than 180 days, and have required inspections at least every 180 days until the project is completed, or your permit will expire. If it appears that 180 days will pass without a required inspection, a request for an extension must be made in writing prior to the expiration date, stating why it is

needed. The Building Official may grant one extension.

If you do not request an extension the cost to re-activate a permit, within one year of the expiration date, will be one-half the original cost of the permit. If the expiration date is older than one year all fees will be as if for a new submittal.

#### **10. How much does a permit cost?**

Permit fees vary depending on the type of construction, square footage, and valuation of your project. The Building Department will determine the value of your project. You may contact the building department for an estimate of fees, however, actual fees are determined upon submittal of your building permit application and determination of scope and value of the project.

The building permit fee may be only one of the required fees. Additional fees may be associated with: Mechanical and plumbing permits, Sewer connection, Water connection, Land use fees ,etc.

#### **11. How soon can I get a building permit?**

Some permits such as miscellaneous plumbing, and mechanical permits can be issued within 24 hours. The time required to obtain permits other than the miscellaneous permits, varies with the plan reviewer's workload. You can call the Building Department and inquire about the approximate review time for specific types of projects.

#### **12. What do I do with my permit?**

File your copy of the permit with other important papers. You will also be issued an inspection card, which must be displayed at the job site where it will be signed by the inspector to indicate his/her approval of the various stages of the construction. The approved plans must be on the job site and available to the inspector at the time of the various inspections.