



WHEN DO I NEED A PERMIT?

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

CITY OF VERNAL, UTAH 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 Vernal City Building Department located at 374 East Main St is available to answer any question you may have Mondays through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You may also contact Building & Safety staff during those same hours by calling 435-789-2271.

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 more than 200 square feet;
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 roofing recover (1 only allowed) , new roofing where all of the old roofing is removed or new sheathing is installed.
7. Build a stairway;
8. Build a retaining wall more than 2 feet 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 2 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 Vernal City Ordinance 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 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 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, 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. ;
4. Install bathroom fans, dryer exhausts, kitchen range exhausts, and appliances that are required to be vented.

Swimming Pool

A permit is required to install a swimming pool 24 inches deep or more, in ground or above.

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:

Buildings 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;
2. Fences not over 2 feet high, unless required for barriers around swimming pools (a swimming pool barrier is required for any swimming pool, hot tub, spa or similar structure intended for swimming, recreational bathing or immersion that contains water over 4 feet depth and constructed after November 21,1990);
3. Retaining walls that are not over 2 feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall unless supporting a surcharge;
4. Private concrete sidewalks, slabs, and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not over any basement or story below;
5. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, interior wall, floor or ceiling covering, and similar finish work;
6. Prefabricated swimming pools where the pool walls are entirely above the adjacent grade. However, barrier requirements are not exempt;
7. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a one- or two-family dwelling;
8. Gutters and downspouts;
9. Door and window replacements (where no structural member is altered or changed).

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, electric tank water heater, 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.

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/replacing countertops
5. Resurfacing Shower walls;
6. Repair/replace Shower heads;
7. Repair/replace Rain Gutters and Downspouts;
8. Add to or alter an irrigation system with an approved back flow device;
9. Re-grouting tile;
10. Install a water filter;
11. Replace a hose bib;
12. Install a fountain or other water feature that is filled by a hose 18 inches in depth or less;

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.

Swimming Pools

A permit is not required for a swimming pool less than 24 inches deep, in ground or above.

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 Department or a Licensed Contractor for help in completing the next steps and process in obtaining a permit. You may contact the Vernal City Building Department at 435-789-2271 or online at www.vernalcity.org.

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 submitting a completed permit application and paying a small permit 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 Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) to ensure that a contractor is legally licensed and bonded to work in Utah. 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 Utah.
- The Vernal City Building 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.

Utah State Law, 58-55-304 (Exemptions from licensure). 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 Utah 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 Utah 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.