



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BUILDING CODE

### PHONE NUMBERS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF QUESTIONS:

Planning and Zoning questions (setbacks, etc.)	509-942-7794
Building Code questions	509-942-7794
Building Permit questions	509-942-7794
	509-942-7615
Water or Sewer Easement questions	509-942-7790
	509-942-7500
Electrical Easement questions (City of Richland Electrical only)	509-942-7403
Electrical Meter questions (City of Richland Electrical only)	509-942-7403
Electrical Permit questions (State Office of L & I Electrical)	509-735-0100
CALL BEFORE YOU DIG	811
Code Enforcement (noise, weeds, other nuisances)	509-942-7739
Building Inspections (permit must be obtained first)	509-942-7565
Inspection of City sidewalk, driveway curb cut, etc.	509-942-7790

### WHAT WORK REQUIRES A BUILDING PERMIT?

All building, plumbing, mechanical, gas, and electrical work requires a permit, including repairs, alterations, improvements, conversions, or demolitions. This includes interior remodeling work. A change of occupancy (such as a house being changed into a commercial business) requires a permit. The State Labor and Industry office in Kennewick (735-0100) issues electrical permits.

A common misconception concerning the requirement for obtaining permits is that work under \$500.00 in value does not require a permit. Such is **NOT** the case. The requirement for permits is based on **WHAT** is being done, not on its value. The following examples **REQUIRE** a permit, even if being done by the owner:

- Replacing a water heater.
- Reroofing any building.
- Interior remodeling of any building requires a permit.
- Partitioning off a previously unfinished basement, such as for a family room, bedroom, or other use.
- Installing a bathroom in a basement.
- Changing a building or tenant space use from one type to another type, even if no remodeling is planned (as in an office tenant space now proposed to be used as a store, or an old warehouse now proposed to be used as an office). A City business license is also required.
- Replacing siding.
- Doing any electrical work requires an electrical permit from State L&I. **CALL 735-0100 FOR ELECTRICAL PERMITS.**
- Doing any plumbing work, except as noted below.
- Replacing windows or doors.
- Carports, porch covers, patios covers, attached decks, and deck covers.

The following are **EXEMPT** from getting permits:

- **PRIVATE** sidewalks, poured concrete patios, and **PRIVATE** driveways that are not more than 30 inches above grade. **A COVERING OVER ANY OF THESE REQUIRES A PERMIT.** Also, prior to doing any work on city right-of-way (such as city sidewalk, curb, gutter, or driveway curb-cut) a right-of-way permit from the City Engineering Dept. is required.
- Installing a fence- **No building permit is required, however, customer will need to speak with Public Works to see if a Right-of-Way permit is required.**
- Painting, wallpapering, installing floor coverings, and similar finish work. Replacing kitchen cabinets, as long as no plumbing fixtures change location, is considered finish work and is exempt from getting a permit.
- Repairing leaks in plumbing pipes, valves, or fixtures.
- Replacing plumbing fixtures, provided that such replacement does not require additional or changed piping. **SHOULD ANY TRAP, DRAINPIPE, SOIL, WASTE OR VENT PIPE BECOME DEFECTIVE, SUCH WORK TO REPLACE THESE ITEMS REQUIRES A PERMIT.**
- Retaining Walls under 42" high must be constructed per City handout, but may be exempt from a building permit. Please check before constructing retaining walls at 942-7794.

**ALL RESIDENTIAL DETACHED ACCESSORY BUILDINGS UNDER 200 S.F. AND COMMERCIAL DETACHED ACCESSORY BUILDINGS UNDER 120 S.F. REQUIRE A ZONING PERMIT (NO FEE) PRIOR TO INSTALLATION. CALL 942-7794 FOR ZONING SETBACK INFORMATION AND INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PERMIT.**

#### **WHAT SIZE IS AN EMERGENCY EGRESS WINDOW?**

An emergency egress window must meet 4 requirements. (1) The actual opening that you would need to crawl out of must be 5.7 square feet. (2) The minimum width of the opening must be 20 inches. (3) The minimum height of the window must be 24 inches. (4) The sill of the window must not be higher than 44 inches off the floor (so that someone could crawl out of the window from floor level, you can imagine trying to get out if it were higher than 44 inches). If the minimum width is used, then you need more than 24 inches of height to get 5.7 square feet of opening, and vice versa if you use the minimum height.

Emergency egress windows are required in new construction. Bedrooms in older homes are "grandfathered" in with their original windows, provided, however, that such bedrooms were officially permitted. Please see handout #8 regarding replacement windows in existing bedrooms.

#### **WHAT SIZE IS A BASEMENT EMERGENCY EGRESS WINDOW?**

Same requirements as above, **AND** once you have crawled out of the window into the window well, the window well can't be less than 36 inches out from the house and deeper than 44 inches (for the same reason that the bottom of the window opening can't be more than 44 inches off the floor), measured from the bottom of the window well to the top near grade. If unavoidable, there are special provisions if the window well is deeper than 44 inches. (See IRC Sec. R310.2.3.1)

#### **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTALLING A REPLACEMENT WATER HEATER?**

The pressure relief valve must be piped to the outside of the building, or, if this is not possible, then piped to a floor drain using copper or CPVC plastic pipe (CPVC is a heat-rated plastic). A permit and an inspection are required for replacing a water heater. The permit fee is \$37.00

#### **ARE THERE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPLACING ROOFING, I.E., REROOFING?**

The Re-roofing and Ice Shields handout describes the requirement for an ice shield for asphalt shingle roofs. A permit is required to re-roof any building.

- **PERMITS FOR INSTALLING LIGHTWEIGHT CONCRETE TILE ROOFS MUST PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION THAT THEIR ROOF STRUCTURE HAS BEEN DESIGNED FOR THE WEIGHT OF THE PROPOSED TILE.** Such documentation must come from the truss manufacturer or from a licensed engineer. For roof structures using rafters, beams, or other framing methods, the required documentation should be a framing plan showing the sizes of the framing members.

#### **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTALLING A LANDSCAPE SPRINKLER SYSTEM?**

A permit is required to install a landscape sprinkler system when connected to city water. The permit cost is \$37.00 and includes the necessary inspections. The City wants to inspect the connection, which is made to the water supply to make sure there is a device to protect the water supply. Such a device is detailed in the Cross Connection brochure. This device must be inspected to verify that the water supply is adequately protected against backflow.

**WHAT ARE THE STRUCTURAL DESIGN LOADS FOR RICHLAND?**

Wind loads:.....85 M.P.H., Exposure C (**ALL** of the City is in exposure category "C").  
Snow loads: .....20 p.s.f.  
Frost depth: .....24 inches  
Seismic Zone:.....C - IRC, D - IBC

**CAN I BUILD A STRUCTURE OVER AN EASEMENT?**

The City does not allow structures to be constructed over an easement.

**HOW DEEP MUST A WATER LINE BE?**

Trenches for service water lines to a building must be 30" deep to avoid freezing. The frost depth for Richland is approximately 24 inches. Going down to 30" for water line trenches helps avoid the possibility of freezing. There is no guarantee that the water line won't freeze, since there are some very harsh winters when the frost depth could reach more than 30", but this has been the standard depth for water lines in the ground.