

Home Owners Guide to Building Permits

Permits are required for all work except ordinary repairs. Separate permits are required for Electrical, Plumbing, & Mechanical work. While the following list in not all-inclusive it provides some examples for the homeowner. Homeowners are reminded to proceed with caution. If you obtain your own permits you are the responsible party for all inspections, fees and fines. Please read the attachment for the complete text of Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Work Description	Permit	Plans	Other
Room additions	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Decks	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Add, relocate interior walls	Yes	Yes	1,2
Change of use	Yes	Yes	1
Footing/Foundation	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Finish or enlarge basement	Yes	Yes	
Add carport	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Enclose carport	Yes	Yes	1,2
Add or enlarge garage	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Masonry walls greater than 6'0" high	Yes	Yes	2,4
Retaining walls greater than 3'0" high	Yes	Yes	2
Install drywall or other interior finishes	Yes	No	
Install sauna	Yes	Yes	
Install prefab fireplace and / or chimney	Yes	Yes	2
Add or enlarge patio, no cover	No	No	2,3
Add or enlarge patio, with cover	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Finish rooms	Yes	Yes	
Install pool	Yes	Yes	2,3
Add dormers	Yes	Yes	2
Add attic pull-down stairs	Yes	Yes	
Install solar energy equipment	Yes	Yes	2
Install siding	No	No	2
Roof repairs to decking or sheathing, less than 100sq.ft.	No	No	
Roof covering replacement more than 100 sq. ft.	No	No	2
Add or enclose porch	Yes	Yes	1,2,3
Replace existing porch	Yes	No	1,2
Screen in existing covered porch	No	No	2
Temporary Access ramps under 30" high	No	No	1,2,3
Install or build a shed more than 256 sq. ft.	Yes	Yes	1,2,4
Swimming pools under 150 sqft., or 5,000 gal., or 24" deep	No	No	1,2,4
Structural repairs of any kind, studs, joists, rafters, etc.	Yes	Yes	2
Storm windows	No	No	2
Replacement windows	No	No	2
Install carpet or flooring	No	No	
Install insulation	No	No	
Install awnings	Yes	No	1,2
Add basement entrance or exit	Yes	Yes	1,2
Exterior stairs	Yes	Yes	1,2
Relocate interior stairs	Yes	Yes	

1. Zoning approval required
2. Historic District, Architectural Review Board approval is required
3. Chesapeake Bay Area, Permits & Engineering Services is required
4. Fences or walls over 6'6" Zoning approval required

Requirements for Commercial and Residential Building Permits

SECTION 108 APPLICATION FOR PERMIT

108.1 When applications are required.

Application for a permit shall be made to the building official and a permit shall be obtained prior to the commencement of any of the following activities, except that applications for emergency construction, alterations or equipment replacement shall be submitted by the end of the first working day that follows the day such work commences. In addition, the building official may authorize work to commence pending the receipt of an application or the issuance of a permit.

1. Construction or demolition of a building or structure. Installations or alterations involving (i) the removal or addition of any wall, partition or portion thereof, (ii) any structural component, (iii) the repair or replacement of any required component of a fire or smoke rated assembly, (iv) the alteration of any required means of egress system, (v) water supply and distribution system, sanitary drainage system or vent system, (vi) electric wiring, (vii) fire protection system, mechanical systems, or fuel supply systems, or (viii) any equipment regulated by the USBC.
2. For change of occupancy, application for a permit shall be made when a new certificate of occupancy is required under Section 103.3.
3. Movement of a lot line that increases the hazard to or decreases the level of safety of an existing building or structure in comparison to the building code under which such building or structure was constructed.
4. Removal or disturbing of any asbestos containing materials during the construction or demolition of a building or structure, including additions.

108.2 Exemptions from application for permit.

Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 108.1, application for a permit and any related inspections shall not be required for the following; however, this section shall not be construed to exempt such activities from other applicable requirements of this code. In addition, when an owner or an owner's agent requests that a permit be issued for any of the following, then a permit shall be issued and any related inspections shall be required.

1. Installation of wiring and equipment that (i) operates at less than 50 volts, (ii) is for network powered broadband communications systems, or (iii) is exempt under Section 102.3(1), except when any such installations are located in a plenum, penetrate fire rated or smoke protected construction or are a component of any of the following:
 - 1.1. Fire alarm system.
 - 1.2. Fire detection system.
 - 1.3. Fire suppression system.
 - 1.4. Smoke control system.
 - 1.5. Fire protection supervisory system.
 - 1.6. Elevator fire safety control system.
 - 1.7. Access or egress control system or delayed egress locking or latching system.

1.8. Fire damper.

1.9. Door control system.

2. One story detached structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses or similar uses, provided the building area does not exceed 256 square feet (23.78 m²) and the structures are not classified as a Group F-1 or H occupancy.

3. Detached prefabricated buildings housing the equipment of a publicly regulated utility service, provided the floor area does not exceed 150 square feet (14 m²).

4. Tents or air-supported structures, or both, that cover an area of 900 square feet (84 m²) or less, including within that area all connecting areas or spaces with a common means of egress or entrance, provided such tents or structures have an occupant load of 50 or less persons.

5. Fences of any height unless required for pedestrian safety as provided for by Section 3306, or used for the barrier for a swimming pool.

6. Concrete or masonry walls, provided such walls do not exceed 6 feet (1829 mm) in height above the finished grade. Ornamental column caps shall not be considered to contribute to the height of the wall and shall be permitted to extend above the 6 feet (1829 mm) height measurement.

7. Retaining walls supporting less than 3 feet (914 mm) of unbalanced fill that are not constructed for the purpose of impounding Class I, II or III-A liquids or supporting a surcharge other than ordinary unbalanced fill.

8. Swimming pools that have a surface area not greater than 150 square feet (13.95 m²), do not exceed 5,000 gallons (19 000 L) and are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep.

9. Signs under the conditions in Section H101.2 of Appendix H.

10. Replacement of above-ground existing LP-gas containers of the same capacity in the same location and associated regulators when installed by the serving gas supplier.

11. Flagpoles 30 feet (9144 mm) or less in height.

12. Temporary ramps serving dwelling units in Group R-3 and R-5 occupancies where the height of the entrance served by the ramp is no more than 30 inches (762 mm) above grade.

13. Construction work deemed by the building official to be minor and ordinary and which does not adversely affect public health or general safety.

14. Ordinary repairs that include the following:

14.1. Replacement of windows and doors with windows and doors of similar operation and opening dimensions that do not require changes to the existing framed opening and that are not required to be fire rated in Group R-2 where serving a single dwelling unit and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5.

14.2. Replacement of plumbing fixtures and well pumps in all groups without alteration of the water supply and distribution systems, sanitary drainage systems or vent systems.

14.3. Replacement of general use snap switches, dimmer and control switches, 125 volt-15 or 20 ampere receptacles, luminaires (lighting fixtures) and ceiling (paddle) fans in Group R-2 where serving a single dwelling unit

and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5.

14.4. Replacement of mechanical appliances provided such equipment is not fueled by gas or oil in Group R-2 where serving a single-family dwelling and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5.

14.5. Replacement of an unlimited amount of roof covering or siding in Groups R-3, R-4 or R-5 provided the building or structure is not in an area where the design (3 second gust) wind speed is greater than 100 miles per hour (160 km/hr) and replacement of 100 square feet (9.29 m²) or less of roof covering in all groups and all wind zones.

14.6. Replacement of 100 square feet (9.29 m²) or less of roof decking in Groups R-3, R-4 or R-5 unless the decking to be replaced was required at the time of original construction to be fire-retardant-treated or protected in some other way to form a fire-rated wall termination.

14.7. Installation or replacement of floor finishes in all occupancies.

14.8. Replacement of Class C interior wall or ceiling finishes installed in Groups A, E and I and replacement of all classes of interior wall or ceiling finishes in other groups.

14.9. Installation or replacement of cabinetry or trim.

14.10. Application of paint or wallpaper.

14.11. Other repair work deemed by the building official to be minor and ordinary which does not adversely affect public health or general safety.

15. Crypts, mausoleums and columbaria structures not exceeding 1,500 square feet (139.35 m²) in area if the building or structure is not for occupancy and used solely for the interment of human or animal remains and is not subject to special inspections.

Exception: Application for a permit may be required by the building official for the installation of replacement siding, roofing and windows in buildings within a historic district designated by a locality pursuant to Section 15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia.

108.3 Applicant information, processing by mail.

Application for a permit shall be made by the owner or lessee of the relevant property or the agent of either or by the RDP, contractor or subcontractor associated with the work or any of their agents. The full name and address of the owner, lessee and applicant shall be provided in the application. If the owner or lessee is a corporate body, when and to the extent determined necessary by the building official, the full name and address of the responsible officers shall also be provided.

A permit application may be submitted by mail and such permit applications shall be processed by mail, unless the permit applicant voluntarily chooses otherwise. In no case shall an applicant be required to appear in person.

The building official may accept applications for a permit through electronic submissions provided the information required by this section is obtained.

108.4 Prerequisites to obtaining permit.

In accordance with Section 54.1-1111 of the Code of Virginia, any person applying to the building department for the construction, removal or improvement of any structure shall furnish prior to the issuance of the permit either (i) satisfactory proof to the building official that he is duly licensed or certified under the terms of Chapter 11 (Section 54.1-1000 et seq.) of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia to carry out or superintend the same or (ii) file a written statement, supported by an affidavit, that he is not subject to licensure or certification as a contractor or

subcontractor pursuant to Chapter 11 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia. The applicant shall also furnish satisfactory proof that the taxes or license fees required by any county, city, or town have been paid so as to be qualified to bid upon or contract for the work for which the permit has been applied.

108.5 Mechanics' lien agent designation.

In accordance with Section 36-98.01 of the Code of Virginia, a building permit issued for any one-family or two-family residential dwelling shall at the time of issuance contain, at the request of the applicant, the name, mailing address, and telephone number of the mechanics' lien agent as defined in Section 43-1 of the Code of Virginia. If the designation of a mechanics' lien agent is not so requested by the applicant, the building permit shall at the time of issuance state that none has been designated with the words "None Designated."

Note: In accordance with Section 43-4.01A of the Code of Virginia, a permit may be amended after it has been initially issued to name a mechanics' lien agent or a new mechanics' lien agent.

108.6 Application form, description of work.

The application for a permit shall be submitted on a form or forms supplied by the local building department. The application shall contain a general description and location of the proposed work and such other information as determined necessary by the building official.

108.7 Amendments to application.

An application for a permit may be amended at any time prior to the completion of the work governed by the permit. Additional construction documents or other records may also be submitted in a like manner. All such submittals shall have the same effect as if filed with the original application for a permit and shall be retained in a like manner as the original filings.

108.8 Time limitation of application.

An application for a permit for any proposed work shall be deemed to have been abandoned six months after the date of filing unless such application has been pursued in good faith or a permit has been issued, except that the building official is authorized to grant one or more extensions of time if a justifiable cause is demonstrated.

SECTION 109 CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

109.1 Submittal of documents.

Construction documents shall be submitted with the application for a permit. The number of sets of such documents to be submitted shall be determined by the locality. Construction documents for one- and two-family dwellings may have floor plans reversed provided an accompanying site plan is approved.

Exception: Construction documents do not need to be submitted when the building official determines the proposed work is of a minor nature.

Note: Information on the types of construction required to be designed by an RDP is included in the "Related Laws Package" available from DHCD.

109.2 Site plan.

When determined necessary by the building official, a site plan shall be submitted with the application for a permit. The site plan shall show to scale the size and location of all proposed construction, including any associated wells, septic tanks or drain fields. The site plan shall also show to scale the size and location of all existing structures on the site, the distances from lot lines to all proposed construction, the established street grades and the proposed finished grades. When determined necessary by the building official, the site plan shall contain the elevation of the lowest floor of any proposed buildings. The site plan shall also be drawn in accordance with an accurate boundary line survey. When the application for a permit is for demolition, the site plan shall show all construction to be demolished and the location and size of all existing structures that are to remain on the site.

Note: Site plans are generally not necessary for alterations, renovations, repairs or the installation of equipment.

109.3 Engineering details.

When determined necessary by the building official, construction documents shall include adequate detail of the structural, mechanical, plumbing or electrical components. Adequate detail may include computations, stress diagrams or other essential technical data and when proposed buildings are more than two stories in height, adequate detail may specifically be required to include where floor penetrations will be made for pipes, wires, conduits, and other components of the electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems and how such floor penetrations will be protected to maintain the required structural integrity or fire-resistance rating, or both. All engineered documents, including relevant computations, shall be sealed by the RDP responsible for the design.

109.4 Examination of documents.

The building official shall examine or cause to be examined all construction documents or site plans, or both, within a reasonable time after filing. If such documents or plans do not comply with the provisions of this code, the permit applicant shall be notified in writing of the reasons, which shall include any adverse construction document review comments or determinations that additional information or engineering details need to be submitted. The review of construction documents for new one- and two-family dwellings for determining compliance with the technical provisions of this code not relating to the site, location or soil conditions associated with the dwellings shall not be required when identical construction documents for identical dwellings have been previously approved in the same locality under the same edition of the code and such construction documents are on file with the local building department.

109.4.1 Expedited construction document review.

The building official may accept reports from an approved person or agency that the construction documents have been examined and conform to the requirements of the USBC and may establish requirements for the person or agency submitting such reports. In addition, where such reports have been submitted, the building official may expedite the issuance of the permit.

109.5 Approval of construction documents.

The approval of construction documents shall be limited to only those items within the scope of the USBC. Either the word "Approved" shall be stamped on all required sets of approved construction documents or an equivalent endorsement in writing shall be provided. One set of the approved construction documents shall be retained for the records of the local building department and one set shall be kept at the building site and shall be available to the building official at all reasonable times.

109.6 Phased approval.

The building official is authorized to issue a permit for the construction of foundations or any other part of a building or structure before the construction documents for the whole building or structure have been submitted, provided that adequate information and detailed statements have been filed complying with pertinent requirements of this code. The holder of such permit for the foundation or other parts of a building or structure shall proceed at the holder's own risk with the building operation and without assurance that a permit for the entire structure will be granted.

SECTION 110 PERMITS

110.1 Approval and issuance of permits.

The building official shall examine or cause to be examined all applications for permits or amendments to such applications within a reasonable time after filing. If the applications or amendments do not comply with the provisions of this code or all pertinent laws and ordinances, the permit shall not be issued and the permit applicant shall be notified in writing of the reasons for not issuing the permit. If the application complies with the applicable requirements of this code, a permit shall be issued as soon as practicable. The issuance of permits shall not be

delayed in an effort to control the pace of construction of new detached one- or two-family dwellings.

110.2 Types of permits.

Separate or combined permits may be required for different areas of construction such as building construction, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical work, or for special construction as determined appropriate by the locality. In addition, permits for two or more buildings or structures on the same lot may be combined. Annual permits may also be issued for any construction regulated by this code. The annual permit holder shall maintain a detailed record of all alterations made under the annual permit. Such record shall be available to the building official and shall be submitted to the local building department if requested by the building official.

110.3 Asbestos inspection in buildings to be renovated or demolished; exceptions.

In accordance with Section 36-99.7 of the Code of Virginia, the local building department shall not issue a building permit allowing a building for which an initial building permit was issued before January 1, 1985, to be renovated or demolished until the local building department receives certification from the owner or his agent that the affected portions of the building have been inspected for the presence of asbestos by an individual licensed to perform such inspections pursuant to Section 54.1-503 of the Code of Virginia and that no asbestos-containing materials were found or that appropriate response actions will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Clean Air Act National Emission Standard for the Hazardous Air Pollutant (NESHAPS) (40 CFR Part 61, Subpart M), and the asbestos worker protection requirements established by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration for construction workers (29 CFR 1926.1101). Local educational agencies that are subject to the requirements established by the Environmental Protection Agency under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) shall also certify compliance with 40 CFR Part 763 and subsequent amendments thereto.

To meet the inspection requirements above, except with respect to schools, asbestos inspection of renovation projects consisting only of repair or replacement of roofing, floorcovering, or siding materials may be satisfied by a statement that the materials to be repaired or replaced are assumed to contain friable asbestos and that asbestos installation, removal, or encapsulation will be accomplished by a licensed asbestos contractor.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to single-family dwellings or residential housing with four or fewer units unless the renovation or demolition of such buildings is for commercial or public development purposes. The provisions of this section shall not apply if the combined amount of regulated asbestos-containing material involved in the renovation or demolition is less than 260 linear feet (79 248 mm) on pipes or less than 160 square feet (14.9 m²) on other facility components or less than 35 cubic feet (1 m³) off facility components where the length or area could not be measured previously.

An abatement area shall not be reoccupied until the building official receives certification from the owner that the response actions have been completed and final clearances have been measured. The final clearance levels for reoccupancy of the abatement area shall be 0.01 or fewer asbestos fibers per cubic centimeter if determined by Phase Contrast Microscopy analysis (PCM) or 70 or fewer structures per square millimeter if determined by Transmission Electron Microscopy analysis (TEM).

110.4 Fire apparatus access road requirements.

The permit applicant shall be informed of any requirements for providing or maintaining fire apparatus access roads prior to the issuance of a building permit.

110.5 Signature on and posting of permits; limitation of approval.

The signature of the building official or authorized representative shall be on or affixed to every permit. A copy of the permit shall be posted on the construction site for public inspection until the work is completed. Such posting shall include the street or lot number, if one has been assigned, to be readable from a public way. In addition, each building or structure to which a street number has been assigned shall, upon completion, have the number displayed so as to be readable from the public way.

A permit shall be considered authority to proceed with construction in accordance with this code, the approved construction documents, the permit application and any approved amendments or modifications. The permit shall not be construed to otherwise authorize the omission or amendment of any provision of this code.

110.6 Abandonment of work.

A building official shall be permitted to revoke a permit if work on the site authorized by the permit is not commenced within six months after issuance of the permit, or if the authorized work on the site is suspended or abandoned for a period of six months after the permit is issued; however, permits issued for plumbing, electrical and mechanical work shall not be revoked if the building permit is still in effect. It shall be the responsibility of the permit applicant to prove to the building official that authorized work includes substantive progress, characterized by approved inspections as specified in Section 113.3 of at least one inspection within a period of six months or other evidence that would indicate substantial work has been performed. Upon written request, the building official may grant one or more extensions of time, not to exceed one year per extension.

110.7 Single-family dwelling permits.

The building official shall be permitted to require a three year time limit to complete construction of new detached single-family dwellings, additions to detached single-family dwellings and residential accessory structures. The time limit shall begin from the issuance date of the permit. The building official may grant extensions of time if the applicant can demonstrate substantive progress, characterized by approved inspections as specified in Section 113.3 of at least one inspection within a period of six months or other evidence that would indicate substantial work has been performed.

110.8 Revocation of a permit.

The building official may revoke a permit or approval issued under this code in the case of any false statement, misrepresentation of fact, abandonment of work, failure to complete construction as required by Section 110.7 or incorrect information supplied by the applicant in the application or construction documents on which the permit or approval was based.

SECTION 111 RDP SERVICES

111.1 When required.

In accordance with Section 54.1-410 of the Code of Virginia and under the general authority of this code, the local building department shall establish a procedure to ensure that construction documents under Section 109 are prepared by an RDP in any case in which the exemptions contained in Section 54.1-401, 54.1-402 or 54.1-402.1 of the Code of Virginia are not applicable or in any case where the building official determines it necessary. When required under Section 54.1-402 of the Code of Virginia or when required by the building official, or both, construction documents shall bear the name and address of the author and his occupation.

Note: Information on the types of construction required to be designed by an RDP is included in the "Related Laws Package" available from DHCD.

111.2 Special inspection requirements.

Special inspections shall be conducted when required by Section 1704. Individuals or agencies, or both, conducting special inspections shall meet the qualification requirements of Sections 1703 and 1704.2.1. The permit applicant shall submit a completed statement of special inspections with the permit application. The building official shall review, and if satisfied that the requirements have been met, approve the statement of special inspections as required in Sections 1704.2.3 and 1705 as a requisite to the issuance of a building permit. The building official may require interim inspection reports. The building official shall receive, and if satisfied that the requirements have been met, approve a final report of special inspections as specified in Section 1704.2.4. All fees and costs related to the special inspections shall be the responsibility of the building owner.