



# *Building Permits: Do I Need One?*

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## **What is a permit?**

- A permit is a legal license which grants permission to construct or alter a structure. Permits are required by Virginia Construction Code section 108 and Code of Virginia section 36-98.
- A permit is a legally binding document by which the builder agrees to comply with the provisions of the code. When the permit is signed by the applicant, the applicant has committed to follow the terms of the permit.

## **Why are permits required?**

- A permit provides code officials the means to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by reducing potential hazards of unsafe construction.
- A permit helps the public understand the laws and ordinances that affect construction.
- A permit provides code officials the means to inspect construction to ensure that minimum standards for materials and construction methods are being used.
- A permit application helps ensure that important code requirements and legal precautions are observed.
- Important information is gathered and contained on the application such as zoning requirements, licensing requirements of contractors to ensure proper class of licenses are being verified as required by state regulatory agencies.

## **The permit process:**

- The building permit process is the primary method by which the Building Department initiates the code enforcement efforts.
- There are six basic steps within the permit process:
  - 1) Pre-application consultation
  - 2) Application
  - 3) Review by staff
  - 4) Approval/Denial
  - 5) Inspections
  - 6) Final inspection and issuance of the certificate of occupancy or approved permit.

**The following list refers to some of the more common do-it-yourself projects. If you are planning a project and are unsure if a permit is required, please visit [www.christiansburg.org](http://www.christiansburg.org) or contact the Building Official's Office at (540)382-6120.**

**The following home improvement projects REQUIRE a permit:**

- Additions of any size
- Attic pull-down stairs
- Attics, finishing existing
- Finishing off an "unfinished basement" of any size
- Carports, new or enclosing existing
- Decks, new, alterations to existing or enclosing existing
- Dormers, new
- Fences and privacy walls exceeding 6 feet in height
- Garages – new construction or finishing off an existing structure
- Porches, new, or alterations to existing
- Retaining walls supporting more than 2 feet of earth (may require engineer design)
- Storage sheds and playhouses- detached and greater than 200 square feet or more than one story (Please note: a zoning permit is also required to verify setbacks)
- Swimming pools greater than 150 square feet, greater than 5000 gallons, or deeper than 24 inches
- The replacement or addition of doors and windows that requires alteration of the framing members

**A permit is required for installation of fixtures and appliances permanently connected to the electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and gas systems, such as:**

- Bathtubs or showers
- Dishwashers
- Fans, attic/ceiling/exhaust
- Garbage disposals
- Heat pumps
- Water heaters, gas/electric
- Gas appliances
- Oil fired appliances

**The following improvement projects typically DO NOT require a building permit:**

*Installation of:*

- Ceramic tile, hardwood flooring, carpet
- Crown molding, baseboards, trim
- Doors or windows in existing openings (Note: If the size of the opening is changed, a permit is required)
- Gutters and downspouts
- Cabinets
- On-grade patios
- Residential re-roofing with new coverings that do not require alteration to the roof framing members and decking
- Replacement siding
- Storage sheds or playhouses less than 200 square feet and only one story (Please note: a zoning permit is required to verify setbacks)

**It is recommended that you contact the Town at (540) 382-6120 ext. 1122 before beginning any construction project to verify what, if any, permits, plans and approvals are required.**

