

CONSTRUCTION TIP SHEET: HOMEOWNERS GUIDE TO THE BUILDING PROCESS

WHY BUILDING PERMITS ARE IMPORTANT

There are several advantages to doing home improvement projects with a building permit. The primary one is getting a permit brings you the services of the Building Official. The Building Official approves each phase of the construction process, checking to see that work is done safely, properly and meets code requirements.

Secondly, there are legal and financial liabilities that you face when you do not get a permit. Work commenced prior to obtaining a permit is illegal and can pose serious complications for you when you try to sell your house. Insurance that you have may be cancelled if you do work without a permit. In the case of a fire occurring in your house, the insurance company may use the illegal work as an excuse not to pay on your claim.

If a question arises regarding the need of a permit, a quick phone call to the City of Lewiston Planning and Code Enforcement Department at 207-513-3125 can be made to determine whether or not a permit is necessary for a particular project.

STEPS IN THE PERMITTING PROCESS

PROJECT PREPARATION: (Additional informational Building Guides and Tip sheets are available on our website for various types of projects.)

Proper preparation of your application, site plan and construction plans is a major key to obtain a permit without unnecessary delays. Plan carefully to make certain that your plans clearly indicate WHAT you are going to do, WHERE you are going to do it and HOW you propose to do it.

PLAN REVIEW:

Your plans will be reviewed by the Building Official, typically on a first come first served basis. Deficient plans, incomplete plans, or questions regarding your plans will result in plan review comments. You will be notified of the deficiencies, incompleteness or questions. You will then need to address these items and resubmit for further review. Once all items are addressed, reviewed and found to be code compliant, the plans will be approved.

CHANGES TO PLANS:

Changes in plans arising after plans have been reviewed and approved, require approval by the Building Official. This may be done over the counter or may require re-submission of revised plans, depending on the complexity of the changes. The prior approved plans, (both the office copy and customer copy) must be updated to show any changes or revisions.

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EXPIRATION OF PLAN REVIEWS:

Plan reviews expire by limitation in 180 days unless an extension is requested and granted by the Building Official. Extension requests must be in writing stating the reason for the request and timeframe. A maximum 180 days may be requested. Please allow ample time for processing your application and plans and do not wait until the last minute to submit for an extension.

PERMIT ISSUANCE:

When your building permit is issued you will receive a copy of your permit which is to be posted on the premises during construction. The plans and permit must be available for the inspector when he performs an inspection. Once the permit is issued and posted on the premises, you are ready to proceed with construction.

ZONING AND LAND USE:

The City of Lewiston divides the city into specific zoned areas depending on what types of activities are permitted. These “zoning districts” are very exact about the use to which property may be put. Check with the Planning and Code Enforcement Department for specific restrictions to the zoning district in which your property is located. Understand that building codes are just that and zoning and land use codes are additional local requirements that must also be met in order for development to occur. For example, to maintain the design and character of your neighborhood, the codes impose certain regulations about where you can build on your property and how big structures can be. Zoning codes can make your plans illegal no matter how well you design the project with respect to the building code, so get the information as soon as possible and save yourself a lot of trouble.

STEPS IN THE INSPECTION PROCESS

To protect the health, safety and welfare of occupants, the Building Official is committed to provide a high level of service to the community by inspecting for code compliance. All such construction or work shall remain accessible and exposed for inspection purposes until approved by the building official. Building regulations require that inspections are completed and approved before concealment or further construction.

To request your inspection, the following information must be provided:

- ✓ WHO: Owners or contractors name and phone number of contact person
- ✓ WHAT: Permit number
- ✓ WHEN: Day inspection is requested for
- ✓ WHERE: Job site address
- ✓ WHY: Stage of work to be inspected

STAGES OF INSPECTION

The following are inspection stages that must be performed prior to work moving forward:

FORMS and FOOTING:

BEFORE pouring concrete, inspection is required to verify the zoning setbacks and inspect the forms. Forms, reinforcing steel, and hold-down anchors must be in place.

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SLAB:

(see above) Forms must be in place.

FLOODPLAIN:

Inspection to check the elevation of the lowest floor if development is within the flood plain.

ROOF SHEATHING and SHEAR PANEL:

When roof sheathing is installed. All shear panels, hold-downs and shear transfer is in place and properly attached.

FRAME and MASONRY:

After all framing, fire blocking and bracing are in place; chimneys and vents are completed; roofing material is loaded on the roof; and rough electrical wiring; plumbing piping; and heating ducts have been installed and inspected by the authority having jurisdiction.

OTHER INSPECTIONS:

The building official shall have the authority to make or require any other inspections to ascertain compliance with this code and other laws enforced by the building official. Check with your building inspector if you are unsure of when inspections are necessary for your project.

FIRE-RESISTANCE-RATED CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION:

Where fire-resistance-rated construction is required between dwelling units or due to location on property, the building official shall require an inspection of such construction after lathing or gypsum board or gypsum panel products are in place, but before any plaster is applied, or before board or panel joints and fasteners are taped and finished.

FINAL INSPECTION:

Final inspection shall be made after the permitted work is complete and prior to occupancy.

FINAL APPROVAL:

After the building inspector makes his inspections and all requirements have been satisfied, your project will be approved.

NOT APPROVED:

The Building Official will notify you of any corrections that need to be completed in order to achieve final approval. When corrections have been accomplished, you will need to schedule an inspection to verify compliance. Time delays and multiple inspections can be avoided if you make sure that work is complete before you call for an inspection. Any necessary tests should be done ahead of time to assure acceptance and compliance.