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Building Division

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Frequently Asked Questions

Can I as a homeowner apply for a construction permit?

A homeowner can obtain a permit and do the construction, alteration or repair on his/her house and accessory buildings or facilities.

Do I need a permit to build a fence around my property?

A permit is not required for fences of lightweight construction up to 6'6" in height. A permit is required for concrete or masonry fences. All fences must comply with the provisions of the Morro Bay Municipal Code with regard to height and location on the property.

What is the allowable fence height?

In most residential areas, fences are limited to 3' in height in the street yard 6'-6" in the side and rear yards. The specific regulations can be found in MBMC Sec. 17.48.100

How much is a building permit and what is it based on?

Building permit fees are calculated based on the valuation of the project. A Permit Fee estimate worksheet can be downloaded [here](#).

What is an over-the-counter permit?

An Over-The-Counter Permit is a permit application for a minor project such as changing out water heater, furnace, electrical panel, or replacing a sewer line. They can be obtained in a single trip to our office without an appointment. You will need to fill out an application with the owner's name, job address, description of work, and pay the permit fee. You may also mail in an application for this type of permit. Please call the permit technician at 772-6261 for more information.

How do I apply for a building permit?

A building permit application and submittal checklist can be downloaded [here](#).

Can a homeowner prepare the drawings, obtain a building permit, and construct their own house or addition without consulting an architect/engineer/contractor?

California State Law allows an unlicensed person to design single-family dwellings of not more than two stories and a basement in height. The plans and construction shall conform to the Conventional Light-Frame Construction provisions of the California Building Code / California Residential Code.

What is an inspection?

All construction work for which a permit is issued is subject to inspection. It is the contractor's responsibility to notify the inspector when the work is ready for inspection. Work is generally inspected and approved in succession and no work may be concealed without first obtaining the approval of the inspector. Common items to be inspected are foundation excavations, concrete work, wood framing, plumbing, electrical, shear wall nailing, roof nailing etc. When completed, the contractor needs to contact the Building Division to schedule a final inspection and approval of the completed project.

What is the Certificate of Occupancy?

A Certificate of Occupancy is issued pursuant to a building permit for new construction, additions, and changes of occupancy approved by the inspector. It is evidence that the Building Official has determined that the construction was done according to the requirements of the code for the given use and occupancy. The Building Permit Inspection Card, when signed for final inspection by the inspector serves as the certificate of occupancy.

Do I need a permit to build a shed?

The maximum is 120 square feet with no utilities. You should consult with the Planning Division to determine setback requirements and design review requirements. A structure larger than 120 feet, or one of any size that contains utilities, requires a building permit.

Do I need a permit to build a retaining wall?

A building permit is required for the construction of retaining walls over 4' in height from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall and or supporting a surcharge. Even if the proposed wall does not require a building permit, it is advisable to discuss your proposed wall with Public Services staff as it still must comply with zoning and building regulations and may require an encroachment permit.

Is a plumbing permit required to replace my dishwasher or garbage disposer?

No.

Is an electrical permit required to replace a light fixture?

No.

Is a permit required to replace my clothes washer or toilet?

No, in fact you may be eligible for a rebate through the City's "Water Conservation Retrofit Program."

Is heating required in a dwelling unit?

Yes. The space must be able to be maintained at a room temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit at a point 3 feet above the floor in all habitable areas.

How are changes to approved plans during construction handled by the Department?

In general, changes to approved plans need to be submitted for review as a permit addendum. It is a good idea to first call the Building Department to discuss the proposed changes prior to resubmitting.

How long is a building permit application good for?

A building permit application is considered abandoned 180 days after the date of filing, unless the application has been pursued in good faith or a permit has been issued.

How long is a building permit good for?

A building permit generally becomes invalid unless the work is commenced within 180 days of issuance, or if the work authorized by the permit is suspended or abandoned for a period of 180 days.

What is the current status of my plan check review?

Contact the Permit Technician at (805) 772-6261.