



When Do I Need a Permit?

Permits are required to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, or demolish a building or structure, to change the use of a building, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system.

Emergency Repairs: When equipment replacements and repairs must be performed in an emergency situation, the permit application shall be submitted to the Permit Center on the next business day.

Work Exempt from Permitting

Only the work listed below is exempt from requiring a permit. Any work, whether or not it requires a permit meet the intent and provisions of the BMC and any other laws or ordinances of the City of Bellingham. Permit exemption does not authorize work in violation of these laws.

Buildings/Structures:

1. *One-story detached residential accessory structures, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
2. *Fences not over 6 feet high.
3. *Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet in height, measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting the weight of a vehicle or structure above.
4. Water tanks supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.
5. *Exterior, on-grade stairways, sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not over any basement or story below.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops and similar finish work.
7. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
8. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a one or two-family residence.
9. *Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
10. Re-roofing of 1 and 2 family dwellings per Re-Roof Requirements form.

*Indicates items that require specific review by Permit Center staff for location, design review, or safety requirements.

Electrical:

Minor repairs and maintenance, including the following:

1. Portable motors or other portable appliances energized by means of a cord or cable having an attachment plug end to be connected to an approved receptacle when that cord or cable is permitted by this code.
2. Repair or replacement of fixed motors, transformers or fixed approved appliances of the same type and rating in the same location.

3. Repair or replacement of parts of any switch, contactor or control device.
4. Reinstallation of receptacles, but not the outlet box or wiring.
5. Repair or replacement of any over-current device of the required capacity in the same location.
6. Repair or replacement of electrodes of the same size and capacity for signs or gas tube systems.
7. Removal of electrical wiring.
8. Temporary wiring for experimental purposes in suitable experimental laboratories, and the wiring for temporary motion picture or television stage sets.
9. The replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.

Mechanical/Gas:

1. Portable equipment and appliances.
2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
3. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment.

Plumbing:

1. Repairing leaks in drain pipe, water pipe or vent pipe.. Removing and replacing any concealed trap, drain pipe, water pipe, waste pipe or vent pipe which is defective and the trap or pipe is replaced with new material approved for the use.
2. Clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures, and the removal, replacement or reinstallation of water closets and sinks when the repairs do not involve or require the relocation of fixtures or rearrangement of valves, or pipes.

Questions about your project? Contact the Permit Center at (360) 778-8300