

GUIDE TO PERMITS FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND CHANGES IN USE

FOSTER TOWNSHIP PA. UNIFORM CONSTRUCTION CODE (UCC)

Prior to the Township accepting building permit applications, the applicant must follow the procedures outlined below:

1. Complete the Zoning Application and provide information as noted, including three (3) sets of site plans.
2. Upon notification of the approved Zoning Permit, the Building Plans will be accepted. Any additional permits, such as but not limited to, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, highway occupancy or Driveway, and sanitary sewer permits must be included with the Building Permit Application.

Applications not including all necessary information will not be accepted.

Please use the information included in this packet to help you determine what permits you need and to apply for them. If you have questions that are not answered, please contact the Township for assistance.

TYPES OF PERMITS

Foster Township issues five types of permits related to building and construction.

ZONING PERMIT

A Zoning Permit is required whenever your project involves placing, constructing, expanding a physical structure on your property (including driveways), or changing the use of your property. A Zoning Permit is also required for Demolition and Signs. This permit confirms that the Zoning Ordinance allows the work or change in use that you are proposing.

BUILDING PERMIT

A Building Permit is required whenever your construction project will need to be inspected to ensure that it meets the standards of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). The UCC covers all aspects of construction: framing, electric, plumbing and mechanical. Any residential project that will affect the structural members of an existing building, addition to building, and new construction, all commercial projects that affect any of these systems must have a building permit. The UCC uses the following codes as its standards:

- International Residential Code 2009 – for Residential Construction, including all referenced standards (Until December 31, 2012)
- International Building Code 2009 – For Commercial Construction, included all referenced standards (Until December 31, 2012)

PLUMBING PERMIT

A Plumbing Permit is required for plumbing improvement projects, residential, additions, and new construction. Commercial all.

HVAC PERMIT

An HVAC/Fuel Tank Permit is required for all HVAC or fuel tank improvement projects, residential, additions and new construction. Commercial all.

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ELECTRICAL PERMIT

An Electrical Permit is required for all electrical improvement projects, residential, additions and new construction. Commercial all.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A BUILDING PERMIT?

It's an official document or certificate issued by the authority having jurisdiction which authorizes performance of a specified activity. The building project must be in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

WHY DO I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT?

The Building Codes are minimum safety standards of all building construction. These codes ensure the safety of you, your family, anyone entering the building/structure and all future occupants.

IS A PERMIT ALWAYS REQUIRED?

No, not all work is required to have a permit, please see below "What Work is Excluded/Exempt from Building Permits?"

-Are you still unsure if you need a permit? Contact your local Building Official.

CONSTRUCTION/WORK EXCLUDED OR EXEMPT FROM PERMITS

Residential work done to an existing structure that is not structural does not require building permit.

1. The following structures is accessory to a detached one-family dwelling:
 - (i) Carports.
 - (ii) Detached private garages.
 - (iii) Greenhouses.
 - (iv) Sheds.
2. An agricultural building.
3. Replacement of windows and doors when there is no change in size of the existing opening.
4. Re-roofing of less than 25 percent of total area.
5. Addition or replacement of siding on the exterior of the residential structure.
6. Repair or Replacement of any nonstructural portion of a deck or porch stoop.
7. Replacement of an appliance switch or receptacle with a switch or receptacle, which is the same or has a like rating.
8. The addition of one appliance switch or receptacle.
9. The repair or replacement of any non-structural member.
10. The repair or replacement of any sink, toilet, tub, shower, or similar plumbing fixture without relocation of any drain or venting device.
11. 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.
12. Installation or rearrangement of communications wiring.
13. Decks not exceeding 200 square feet in area, that are not more than 30 inches above grade at any point, are not attached to a dwelling and do not serve the exit door required by Section R311.4 of the International Residential Code.

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14. Manufactured or industrialized housing shipped from the factory under section 901(a) of the act (35 P. S. § 7210.901(a)) as provided in § 403.25 (relating to manufactured and industrialized housing). However, the foundation, water and waste connections and electric service connection requires a permit and applicable inspections.
 15. Installation of tubing, piping, propane gas burning appliances, equipment or fixtures related to liquefied petroleum gas under the Propane and Liquefied Petroleum Gas Act (35 P. S. § § 1329.1—1329.19).
 16. Construction of individual sewage disposal systems under 25 Pa. Code Chapter 73 (relating to on lot sewage treatment facilities). A permit from the Sewage Enforcement Officer must be submitted to the Township prior to work being performed.
 17. Alterations to residential buildings which do not make structural changes or changes to means of egress, except as required by ordinances in effect under sections 303(b)(1) or 503 of the act (35 P. S. § § 7210.303(b)(1) and 7210.503). Under this subsection, a structural change does not include a minor framing change needed to replace existing windows or doors.
 18. Repairs to residential buildings, except as required by ordinances in effect under sections 303(b)(1) and 503 of the act. Ordinary repairs do not require a permit. The following list shows examples of non-ordinary repairs:
 - Cutting away and wall partition or part of a wall
 - Removing or cutting any structural/load bearing support
 - Removing or changing any required means of egress
 - Changes of any kind to any standpipe, water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas, soil, waste, vent, electrical wiring or HVAC.
 19. Installation of aluminum or vinyl siding onto an existing residential or an existing commercial building, except as might be required by ordinances in effect under section 303(b)(1) (35 P. S. § § 7210.303(b)(1)) or section 503 of the act.
 20. A recreational cabin if the following conditions are met:
 - (i) The cabin is equipped with at least one smoke detector, one fire extinguisher and one carbon monoxide detector in both the kitchen and sleeping quarters.
 - (ii) The owner of the cabin files one of the following with the municipality:
 - a) A Department form UCC-13 attesting to the fact that the cabin meets the definition of a “recreational cabin” in § 401.1 (relating to definitions).
 - b) A valid proof of insurance for the recreational cabin, written and issued by an insurer authorized to do business in this Commonwealth, stating that the structure meets the definition of a “recreational cabin.”
 - (iii) *Continuity of recreational cabin exclusion.*
 - a) Upon the transfer of ownership of a recreational cabin subject to the recreational cabin exclusion, written notice of the following shall be provided in the sales agreement and the deed:
 - The recreational cabin is exempt from the act.
 - The recreational cabin may not be in conformance with the Uniform Construction Code.
 - The recreational cabin is not subject to municipal regulation.
- Failure to comply with the notice requirement under paragraph (1) renders the sale void at the purchaser’s option.
21. Prior permits and construction.
 - (i) Construction may be completed without a permit under section 104(c)(2) of the act when construction of a building or structure commenced before April 9, 2004, and a permit was not required at that time.

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- (ii) The legal occupancy of a structure existing on April 9, 2004, may continue without change except where the Uniform Construction Code provides otherwise.
 - (iii) The Uniform Construction Code applies to the construction of a residential building or structure governed by a homeowner's or community association under section 104(d)(2)(ii) of the act.
 - (iv) The electrical provision, and lumber and wood provisions, not relating to pressure treatment, of the Uniform Construction Code do not apply to a dwelling unit or one-room school house utilized by a member or members of a recognized religious sect if a code administrator grants an exemption under section 901(b) of the act (35 P. S. § 7210.901(b)) as follows:
 - a) The permit applicant shall file an application with the code administrator stating the manner in which an electrical provision, and the lumber and wood provision unrelated to pressure treatment of the Uniform Construction Code conflicts with the applicant's religious beliefs. The application must also contain an affidavit by the applicant stating:
 - The permit applicant is a member of a religious sect.
 - The religious sect has established tenets or teachings which conflict with an electrical provision and lumber and wood provisions unrelated to pressure treatment of the Uniform Construction Code.
 - The permit applicant adheres to the established tenets or teachings of the sect.
 - For a dwelling unit, the dwelling will be used solely as a residence for the permit applicant and the applicant's household.
 - For a one-room school house, the school house will be used solely by members of the religious sect.
 - b) The code administrator shall grant the application for the exemption if made in accordance with paragraph (1).
 - c) If the permit applicant receives an exemption for a building under section 901(b) of the act and the applicant subsequently sells or leases the building, the applicant shall bring the building into compliance with the provision of the Uniform Construction Code from which it was exempted prior to the sale or lease of the building unless the prospective subsequent owner or lessee files an affidavit in compliance with paragraph (1).
 - (v) Coal-fired boilers installed in residential buildings must be designed, constructed and tested in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 20, section M2001.1.1 of the "International Residential Code," except for the ASME stamping requirement.
23. Fences not over 6 feet high.
 24. 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 a surcharge.
 25. 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.
 26. Sidewalks and driveways.
 27. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops and similar finish work.
 28. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
 29. Swings and other playground equipment, accessory to a residential structure.
 30. 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.
 31. When repairing and maintaining electrical equipment a permit shall not be required for minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
 32. The following gas equipment shall not need a permit:
 - (i) Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliances.
 - (ii) Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.

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- (iii) Portable-fuel- cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.
33. The following mechanical equipment shall not need a permit:
- (i) Portable heating appliances
 - (ii) Portable ventilation appliances.
 - (iii) Portable cooling units
 - (iv) Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
 - (v) Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
 - (vi) Portable evaporation coolers.
 - (vii) Self – contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds (4.54kg) or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less
 - (viii) Portable-fuel- cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

BUILDING INSPECTION

The Township’s inspectors will perform all inspections.

PERMIT PROCESS

All permit applications and accompanying drawings and forms are to be submitted in triplicate. Fees are paid at the time of application. Approved permits will not be released until all fees are paid.

1. The property owner and contractor will complete the Zoning Permit Application
2. Contractor must have a PA Home Improvement Contractor Registration Number and a current Certificate of Insurance with Foster Township as the Certificate holder. Commercial and new home builders need to register with the Township.
3. When the completed applications are returned to the Township, they will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with township regulations.
4. Based on the review, the Zoning Officer/Building Code Official will either issue or deny the permits.
5. The property owner and contractor will then complete the Building Permit Application, including three (3) sets of plans of the structure.
6. When the Building Permit application is returned to the Township, it will be reviewed for completeness and date stamped.
7. The Building Code Official will either issue or deny the permit within 5 working days for stamped drawings, otherwise within 15 days for residential, or 30 working days for commercial.
8. Construction may begin when the permits have been released and picked up.
9. Inspections of the ongoing work must be coordinated with the Building Code Official.
10. When the project is completed and has met all construction codes, a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued within 5 working days of final inspection/compliance.

REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMON PROJECTS

New Home

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit, Plumbing, Electrical and HVAC Permits required
3. Smoke detectors must operate from the house’s electrical system with battery backup.
4. Setbacks vary by zoning district.
5. On-site Sewer and Well Permit from PADEP or SEO.
6. Driveway or Highway Occupancy Permit from PennDOT, if applicable

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House Addition

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Plumbing, Electrical and/or HVAC Permits required (if applicable to your project)
4. Smoke detectors in the affected area must be upgraded to operate from the house's electrical system with battery backup.
5. Setbacks are the same as for the house and vary by zoning district.
6. Adequacy letter for the existing On-Site System from the SEO is required (if applicable)

Detached Garage/Accessory Building

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Plumbing, Electrical and/or HVAC Permits required (if applicable to your project)

Storage Shed, Gazebo or Temporary "Pod" Type Storage Unit

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Accessory structures associated with one- and two-family dwellings are exempt.

Patio

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Setbacks are the same as for the house and vary by zoning district.

Deck

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Setbacks are the same as for the house and vary by zoning district
4. Approval letter from the Homeowners' Association (if applicable)

Fences

1. Zoning Permit required except for small sections of fence used for landscaping or privacy
2. Building permit if over 6 feet.
3. Fences may be up to the property line, but not on it.
4. Refer to Zoning Ordinance for requirements even if your fence does not require a permit.
5. Approval letter from the Homeowners' Association (if applicable)

Above Ground Pool

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Plumbing, Electrical and/or HVAC Permits required (if applicable to your project)

In-Ground Pool

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required
3. Plumbing, Electrical and/or HVAC Permits required (if applicable to your project)

Hot Tub/Spa

1. Zoning Permit required
2. Building Permit required if deeper than 24 inches.
3. Plumbing, Electrical and/or HVAC Permits required (if applicable to your project)
4. Must be located in rear yard, or side yard if it does not abut a street.
5. Setbacks are 10 feet from the side and rear property lines.

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1. All other approvals must be obtained first, if required: including but not limited to: PA contractor registration, zoning permit, Well Permit (addition or new house construction) and Sewer Permit (addition or new house construction). In some situations, a decision from the Zoning Hearing Board or for conditional use may be required.
2. Since this application form is used for a variety of projects, all the blank lines on the form do not have to be completed.
3. Both the property owner and contractor must sign the application unless a notarized letter is executed by the property owner authorizing the contractor to sign as Agent.
4. Tax map information and zoning district can be provided by Township personnel.
5. Describe what you are doing in a little detail. Provide enough information to allow the Township to understand the use for the construction. Examples:
 - Adding a room on a slab foundation to the first-floor rear of the house
 - Remodeling the kitchen/removing partition between dining area and kitchen
 - Finishing a 12' x 16' area of the basement as a family room
 - Placing a 12' x 16' utility shed in the rear yard
6. Construction outside the walls of the dwelling requires measuring distances to the property lines. These measurements are also required on the plot plan to accompany the Zoning Permit application. Provide a drawing of your lot ("Plot Plan") showing sufficient detail.
7. If you are building outside the walls of the dwelling, or setting down a structure on the property, give the width, depth, height, number of stories, type of construction, floor area, and cost of the project.
8. If your project is within the dwelling, provide a floor plan of the existing dwelling and show proposed changes.
9. Once your permit is approved, please note that you must build your project according to the approved plans. If you vary from your plans you may inadvertently violate the zoning ordinance, triggering the need to apply to the Zoning Hearing Board for relief, which may or may not be granted. This is when you receive your official document authorizing you to start construction/installation. Your permit shall be posted in a conspicuous place facing the main approach to the worksite and shall remain posted until work is finished and approved for use.
10. Include the following in your plans:
 - Foundation plan for basement or crawl space
 - Floor plans for all floors
 - Section view showing all framing, supports, sheathing, wall coverings, rafters, roof coverings, attic ventilation, insulation, etc.
 - Elevation views from all sides of the structure with finish grades
 - Electrical plans for each floor
 - Framing plans for each floor (If using manufactured supports please provide diagrams and calculations from the manufacturer)
 - Mechanical diagrams for the structure
 - Plumbing drain/waste/vent riser diagram
11. If any part of your structure is not covered in the codes you will need your plans/specifications signed and sealed by an engineer/architect that is certified in that area. All engineered components must be signed and sealed by the Design Professional and it must be labeled specifically for that job.
12. SITE INSPECTIONS- Onsite Inspections are required at different stages during your construction process. Here is a list of inspections:
 - **Footing Inspection** (Pre concrete pour)
 - **Foundation Inspection** (Pre concrete pour)
 - **Backfill Inspection** (*Post water-proofing*)
 - **Under slab Inspection** (*plumbing, electric, etc.*)

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- **Electrical Service Inspection** (*Must provide Electric Utility Job Number*)
- **Rough Electrical Inspection**
- **Rough Plumbing Inspection**
- **Rough HVAC Inspection**
- **Rough Framing/Masonry Inspection**
- **Insulation/Energy Inspection**
- **Wallboard Inspection**
- **Final Inspection**

When you receive your permit, it will be marked with what inspections you will need to complete your construction project. Unsure when to schedule certain inspections, please contact your local Building Official.

Please have all specifications for installed equipment/materials available onsite.

FINAL APPROVAL

When the project is in total compliance with local requirements, the Code Official will provide you with appropriate documentation of completion.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

When equipment replacements or repairs must be performed in an emergency situation, the permit application must be submitted within the next working business day to the building code official.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information regarding permits, contact the Foster Township staff. For questions other than basic inquiries, you will be referred to the Zoning Officer/Building Code Official.