

BEAR CREEK TOWNSHIP BUILDING DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FACTS AND QUESTIONS

WHAT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS REQUIRE A BUILDING PERMIT?

Most new construction will require a building permit. Only a couple of projects, being newly constructed, are exempt from building permits. These include detached residential accessory buildings, like storage sheds, that are under 200 square feet in size, and buildings being used for agricultural purposes only. If the building project is an agricultural building, a building permit should be applied for, after which the building department will have the applicant sign an agricultural affidavit, which states that the building will be used for agricultural purposes only. Other projects requiring permits include additions, decks, siding and re-shingling and remodeling projects. If you are changing the use of the building or spaces within, a building permit is required. If you are building walls or altering the structure, a building permit is required. Painting, wallpapering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets and countertops and similar finish work does not require a permit. If you are in doubt about needing a building permit, it is advised that you check with the building department, prior to beginning your project.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A BUILDING PERMIT?

Building permits are a requirement of the state building code. Most building permits are issued by local units of government, such as city, county, or township. The issuance of building permits help these local units of government keep track of construction activity in their areas. By issuing building permits, these local units of government can also be sure that the buildings being constructed are meeting the minimum requirements of the state building code, thereby providing safe buildings in their communities.

WHAT IS THE PERMIT PROCESS?

The permit process includes all the steps required for a building permit to be issued. These include application for the permit, processing of the application and all other paperwork required a review of the submitted plans, payment for the permit, and finally, the issuance of the permit.

WHAT IS A BUILDING CODE?

A building code is a minimum set of construction standards that must be followed in the construction of the buildings and structures that we use and occupy.

WHO NEEDS BUILDING CODES?

We all need building codes, so that the methods being used for the construction or remodeling of buildings will provide structures that are safe for all to use and occupy. The building code provides the minimum requirements for builders to follow in construction projects. The building code helps provide the consumer with some sense of security, knowing that their building is required to meet certain building and safety codes.

HOW RELIABLE ARE BUILDING CODES?

Building codes have been around for many years. As the years have passed, many changes to the building code have been made. Building codes are, and will continue to be fairly reliable, as long as the building

codes continue to be updated. With the development of new and improved methods of construction, and constant changes in the materials with which we build, changes in the building code are inevitable. These changes must be made to help in providing safe, structurally sound buildings that will last for many years.

WHY INSPECT A BUILDING DURING CONSTRUCTION?

Inspection of a building is needed to ensure that the construction of, and the materials used, meet the minimum requirements of the building code. Through inspections of a building project, the builder is assisted by the inspector to make sure what is being built will meet code requirements. The building owner is assured through inspections, that they are getting a building that is considered safe and constructed to building code requirements.

WHAT IF I WANT TO DO A BUILDING PROJECT MYSELF?

A building owner can do a building project themselves, as long as it is for their own use and on their own property.

WHY SHOULD MINIMUM SAFETY CODES APPLY TO MY OWN HOUSE?

Minimum safety codes must apply to all buildings covered by the state building code. As much as we like to have control of our future, no one knows for sure what their future holds in store for them. It is inevitable, that the building you own today, will eventually belong to someone else. By having your home meet building code requirements, not only are you provided with a building that is constructed safely, future owners are protected as well.

WHAT CODE DO YOU USE?

The entire state of Michigan is under the “2015 Michigan Residential Building Code” for one and two family dwellings, and the “2015 Michigan Building Code” for all other buildings. The current “Michigan Building Codes” are modeled after the “International Building Codes”, which are now being adopted in many parts of our country.

HOW DO I FIND AND HIRE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR?

There are many building contractors out there, and finding the right for your project is a big decision. Your local home builders association may be a good place to start. Checking with friends, co-workers, local building supply centers, Realtors, and neighbors may also provide some insight. Be sure to ask for references, and ask to see other building projects that the builder may have done in the past few years. Talk to the owners of these projects, if possible. Their insight on a builder can be very helpful in choosing the right builder for your project. After you have chosen a builder, be sure to have a written contract with them. Be sure this contract contains all the information pertinent to your building project, including costs, scope of the project, the time frame for the work being done, and warranties, to protect you after the job has been completed.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I START MY PROJECT BEFORE I OBTAIN A BUILDING PERMIT?

When the Building Dept. discovers a building project that has been started without a permit, we first make an attempt at contacting the property owner, in writing, to inform them that a permit is required for their project. If the required permit is still not applied for, a second violation letter is sent. If we still

get no response a “Stop Work Order” is posted. If the “Stop Work Order is ignored, and no permit is applied for, civil citations and/or prosecution would be the next steps taken.

CAN I APPLY FOR A BUILDING PERMIT IF THE PROPERTY IS NOT IN MY NAME?

The building permit can be applied for, by the property owner, the building contractor, the architect, or anyone authorized to act as a representative of the property owner. Typically the permit is issued to either the property owner or the building contractor.

CAN I HAVE A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER APPLY FOR A PERMIT IF THEY WORK FOR A CONTRACTOR?

No, if the work is being contracted out to others, it should be done by a licensed contractor. The licensed contractor normally applies for the permit covering the work that he is doing. If, however, a property owner applies for a homeowner’s permit, and the project is being done for themselves, on their own property, family and friends can certainly assist in the building project, since the permit is issued to the owner, they are responsible for all work being done.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A BUILDING PERMIT?

Typically, it takes about 2 weeks for a building permit to be issued, depending on the time of the year that an application is submitted. During the busier times of the year, it may take slightly longer. This time allows for the processing of all the information submitted, requests for any other information not submitted, obtaining all other required permits, and the issuance of the permit.

ARE THERE ANY PAPERS I NEED TO BRING WITH ME WHEN I APPLY FOR A PERMIT?

Building projects require approval from other government offices as well. When you apply for your building permit, approval from the Health Dept., the Zoning Dept., and a driveway permit from the Road Commission may also be required. If your project is located near the water or sand dunes, a Soil and Erosion permit may also be required. 2 sets of plans for your project, including a site plan, also need to be submitted. 1 set of plans is placed in the job file, while the other set is returned to the permit holder, along with the building permit, and depending on the project, a plan review may also be included. The plan review will note certain code requirements that may not have been noted on the plans. If your project involves the use of engineered trusses, you will eventually be asked for a set of truss specs. These truss specs show how the truss company engineered your particular set of trusses. The building dept. requires a set of these truss specs to be a permanent part of the job file. For manufactured and pre-manufactured homes, a foundation plan, building systems approval report, and tiedown specifications, (all of which are available from the building manufacturer) are required as well. Any paperwork required for a permit that is not submitted with the application, will be requested, and must be submitted, prior to the issuance of the building permit.

HOW MUCH WILL THE PERMIT COST ME?

The permit fee is based on a few things. These include the use of the building, the type of building being constructed, the size of the building and the value of the building when completed. Permit fees are typically calculated using a formula of square footage multiplied by an average cost per square foot for construction.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T CALL FOR INSPECTIONS?

Failure to call for inspections could result in delays and extra costs in the project. For example, if the foundation is backfilled prior to the footing or foundation inspection, additional excavation may be required to expose areas of the foundation down to the footings, for inspection. If walls and ceilings are covered prior to a frame inspection, finish materials may have to be removed so that the framing behind the finish materials can be seen. Failure to have the required inspections will delay the issuance of the final approval and the "Certificate of Occupancy". A Certificate of Occupancy is issued after all the trades in a building project have had final approval. Many financial institutions are now requiring that a Certificate of Occupancy be issued prior to closing on a mortgage. Insurance companies may require proof that final inspections have been done, prior to insuring a property. The Certificate of Occupancy is proof that all final inspections have been done and approved. By skipping inspections, during the construction process, final approvals may not be given, thereby holding up other important things, like closing on your mortgage and the issuance of insurance policies. Building projects are time consuming and costly enough, not calling for inspections will only add to that time and cost.

CAN I MOVE INTO MY NEW HOME BEFORE IT IS ACTUALLY FINISHED?

Some people need to move into their homes prior to their building being completed. The Building Dept. can issue a "Temporary Certificate of Occupancy". This allows legal occupancy of the building without it being totally finished. Certain safety issues must be addressed prior to a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy being issued though. Some of these items include heat, running water, a working bathroom, cooking facilities, lights, smoke detectors, handrails and guardrails where required at stairs, decks, landings, etc.. All trades require approval for a "Temporary Certificate of Occupancy" to be issued.

WHAT IS THE FROST DEPTH, HERE IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN?

The frost depth for this area, and most of the state of Michigan, is 42". Footings are required to be a minimum of 42" deep., measured from the finish grade to the bottom of the footing.

CAN I BUILD A GARAGE ON A "FLOATING SLAB"?

The residential code allows a detached garage to be constructed on a floating slab (without frost depth protection) if the garage is 600 square feet or smaller in area, is constructed of light frame construction, and has an eave height of 10 feet or less. For garages constructed with other than light frame construction, and an eave height of 10 feet or less, the maximum area allowed without frost depth protection is 400 square feet in area. Garages not meeting this criteria must have frost depth protection for their foundation.

CAN I CUT OR MODIFY THE TRUSSES BEING USED IN MY BUILDING PROJECT?

Typically it is best to layout all framing , from the floor up to the roof, allowing space for chimney's, plumbing, ductwork, etc. Occasionally though, things just don't work the way we plan them. An engineered truss system should never be jobsite modified without contacting the truss manufacturer, to be sure that repairs can be made to restore the integrity of the truss. If modifications are allowed, the truss manufacturer will provide, in writing, how the repairs need to be made. A copy of this documentation should be submitted to the building dept., along with a complete set of truss specs.

DO I ONLY NEED AN ELECTRICAL PERMIT FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION?

Anytime wiring is added or replaced an electrical permit is and an inspection is required.

CAN I DO THE ELECTRICAL WORK MYSELF?

A homeowner can apply for the permit and do the work themselves on the home that they currently occupy or are about to occupy (new construction) commercial, industrial, apartments and rental units will require and electrical contractor to apply for the permit and do the work.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR OVER-HEAD TO UNDER-GROUND?

Contact your local power company for the requirements for a disconnect and reconnect. An electrical permit and inspection will be required and our office will need a minimum of 2 days notice of inspection time for disconnects and reconnects.

CAN YOU RECOMMEND AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR?

We can not recommend an Electrician, you could check the yellow pages or ask friends and neighbors who they would recommend.

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT ELECTRICAL COMPANY SERVICES MY AREA?

No, the coverage is very large for some companies and there are certain areas where a few feet can make the difference in companies that service your house. Your better off asking neighbors or calling the companies listed below to check with them.

Great Lakes Energy: 1-888-485-2537

Consumers Energy: 1-800-477-5050

MissDig:800-482-7171)

City of Petoskey: 231-347-2500

City of Harbor Springs: 231-526-0602

EMMET COUNTY COVERS PLUMBING AND MECHANICAL FOR BEAR CREEK TOWNSHIP PLEASE CONTACT THEM WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE 231-348-1735.