



Permitting and Inspections Department  
Michael A. Russell, MS, Director

## Permitting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### When is a Building Permit required?

A building permit is required when a property owner intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, convert, demolish or change the use of a building or structure. Obtaining a permit can be one of the most important actions before starting a home improvement project.

#### Below are a few of the projects that require a permit:

- Basement Finishes
- Decks/Porches
- Furnaces/Heating Appliances, including replacements (separate HVAC permit required)
- Accessory Structures (Sheds, Garages, Gazebos, etc.)
- Interior Remodeling
- All Plumbing Work (separate plumbing permit required)
- All Electrical Work (separate electrical permit required)
- Additions
- Swimming pool installations
- Change of Use or Home Occupation
- Windows - Replacement or New Installations

*A building permit will be required for the replacement of windows in the following circumstances:*

- All commercial/institutional buildings
- All residential buildings with four or more units

### How do I obtain a Building Permit?

All submission checklists and permit applications can be found on the Permitting and Inspections Department website at <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1728/Permitting-Inspections>. Select the submission checklist relevant to your project. Multi-Family (3 or more units), including interior work within a dwelling unit in a multi-family building, and commercial projects should use the Commercial checklists. Review the submission checklist and include all required items on the list, as applicable. The completed checklist should be submitted along with the General Building Permit Application and all required drawings and documents to [permitting@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:permitting@portlandmaine.gov). Submitting high quality drawings will help expedite your application.

### Who will review my permit application?

The review of a building permit application includes a review of zoning, building code, and life safety code compliance (all commercial and multi-family projects and new one- and two family dwelling units) by the Permitting and Inspections Department. Some projects may also require review by historic preservation planning (Planning and Urban Development Department) and/or engineering (Public Works Department). Each department reviews the project for compliance with different codes, regulations and standards, and they may request additional information, revisions or clarification to plans at different points in the review process. Providing all necessary information with the initial submission will facilitate the review of your application. Submitting high quality drawings will help expedite your application.

### How can I check the status of my permit application?

You can check the status of your permit application here: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1786/Check-your-Permit->



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**Status.** Please check the status of your permit online to see the department reviews required and any comments before contacting the Permitting and Inspections Department. If you need additional information about the status of your project, the quickest way to get a response is to email [permitting@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:permitting@portlandmaine.gov) or call (207) 874-8703.

### **How long will the review process take?**

Reviews of building permit applications can take up to 30 business days for applications that are complete. Applications that are missing required information may take longer to review. To expedite the review process, please review the submission checklists carefully and submit all required drawings and materials with complete and legible information. Submitting high quality drawings will help expedite your application.

### **Do my plans need to be prepared by an architect or engineer?**

Because of the complex nature of the building code and life safety code requirements, most commercial and multi-family construction projects require plans that are stamped and signed by a licensed architect or engineer. Please refer to the department [Policy on Requirements for Stamped or Sealed Drawings](#).

### **How do I apply for a permit through the Fast Track process?**

Review the [eligible projects sheet](#) to verify that your project qualifies for Fast Track. If your project qualifies, you may complete the Fast Track form (Schedule [A](#), [B](#) or [C](#)) and include this form with the rest of your submission to be expedited. The Fast Track form should be filled out completely and all submission materials provided to be processed as a Fast Track application. If it is determined that your project does not qualify for Fast Track, then you will be notified, and the application will be moved forward in the regular review queue. Please note that by submitting your application as Fast Track, you assume responsibility for complying with all applicable code requirements and zoning legal use.

### **Who can answer my question about building code requirements?**

Due to increased demand for permit application reviews, the Permitting and Inspections Department staff do not meet with applicants for building code consultation prior to the submission of a permit application. You may need to work with a design professional (architect or engineer) to provide the necessary drawings and code review required to submit a permit application. If you would like to meet formally to discuss a potential project, you may submit a [Pre-Application Request form](#) through the Planning and Urban Development Department. Representatives from various city departments attend the Pre-Application meetings to answer any questions you may have about your project.

### **Who can answer my question about zoning?**

For immediate assistance, please refer to the [Zoning FAQ](#) on the Permitting and Inspections website. This document will walk you through finding your zoning district and the district requirements in [Chapter 14 of the City Ordinance](#). Property files are available for review at City Hall, Room 315 during normal business hours. Please note that the City no longer provides zoning determination letters. If you still have zoning questions after reviewing the above resources, please contact [zoning@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:zoning@portlandmaine.gov).

If you cannot find the answer to your question from the information above, please contact the Permitting and Inspections Department at [permitting@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:permitting@portlandmaine.gov) or (207) 874-8703 and a Permit Technician will assist you.