



GUIDE TO THE BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING
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Promoting the Wise Use of Land • Helping to Build Great Communities

INTRODUCTION

This is your guide to construction permits. It is designed to help answer your questions about the process, including:

- ✓ **When do I need a construction permit?**
- ✓ **Where do I begin, if I need to obtain a construction permit?**
- ✓ **What information must I provide to be sure my permit application is complete?**
- ✓ **Who can prepare my plans?**
- ✓ **What are the steps in the process?**
- ✓ **When can I start work?**
- ✓ **How long will my application remain valid?**
- ✓ **How long will the process take?**
- ✓ **Will I need more than one construction permit?**

WHEN IS A CONSTRUCTION PERMIT NEEDED?

A construction permit is needed for almost any project that involves building or altering a structure or its plumbing, mechanical or electrical systems. Additionally, any project that includes grading, where soil will be removed and/or filled in, usually requires a grading permit. (For more information, refer to the information bulletin "Guide to Residential Grading").

The procedures and regulations that determine if a permit is necessary and how it is reviewed are set forth in county ordinances and/or state law. Such documents include the:

- ❖ 2007 California Building Code (based on 2006 IBC)
- ❖ 2007 California Electrical Code (based on 2005 NEC)
- ❖ 2007 California Mechanical Code (based on 2006 UMC by IAPMO)
- ❖ 2007 California Plumbing Code (based on 2006 UPC by IAPMO)
- ❖ California Title 24: California State Energy and Accessibility Standards
- ❖ County Building and Construction Ordinance – Title 19
- ❖ County Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance – Title 23
- ❖ County Fire Code Ordinance – Title 16
- ❖ County Land Use Ordinance – Title 22

Please call our office to inquire about the purchase of these documents. For information about the construction and inspection phase of your project, please refer to the information bulletin "Guide to Building Inspections."

NOTICE: Most new dwellings require an allotment before a permit can be applied for. See Growth Management handout.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

When you are planning a minor project such as a re-roofing or a new electrical service, you can obtain an over-the-counter permit at the permit center or on our website.

When you plan to construct or significantly alter a building, perform on-site grading, build fences, make ponds, build a swimming pool, move a building, or build retaining walls, you will need to follow the steps listed in this bulletin in order to obtain your construction permit.

WHAT INFORMATION MUST I PROVIDE AND HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

An application for construction permit must include the following information:

- A. **Construction Permit Application** - A standardized application to provide information about your project. Included with this application is the "Consent of Landowner" form, authorizing an agent to act for the landowner. Other information, such as contractor/architect/engineer, is required.
- B. **Property and Project Layout** - This includes both a site plan (an accurately scaled drawing of the property to be developed) showing all existing and proposed building locations including all existing site grading and proposed site grading, and a vicinity map (a map showing how to get to the property). For more information on the specific requirements refer to the "Sample Property and Project Layout."
- C. **Three Complete Sets of Construction Plans** - Three copies (not the originals) of the plans specifications and engineering for the project. Refer to the "Building Permit Submittal Checklist" for information about what the plans are required to contain.

The property owner or a draftsman may prepare plans if they are within the building code's "conventional construction" classification for construction of, or alterations to, a single family dwelling.

Plans for commercial buildings, or for any portion of a single family dwelling using non-conventional construction, must be prepared by either an architect or engineer licensed by the State of California. For more information, you can call a Plans Examiner at 781-5600.

- D. **Verification of Water, Sewer and Fire Services** - A will-serve letter from your water purveyor, sewer purveyor, and fire department must be attached to any application for a project prior to issuing your permit.

If you have an on-site well, you must submit a well report prepared by a registered hydrologist or geologist, or a well driller licensed by the county and state, which shows that adequate potable water, is available on-site.

- E. **Other Requirements** - In some cases, additional information must be provided before a construction permit can be issued. Soils or special reports, approvals or additional plans may be necessary if the property is located in a Combining Designation, if Conditions of Approval from a land use permit exist (for more information, refer to the information bulletin "Users Guide to the Condition Compliance Process"), or if other county departments need specific information. These are called "conditions" and the permit cannot be issued until the items are completed. **Conditions will be recorded by the Permit Technician and/or the plans examiner. You will be provided a list of conditions that must be completed before your application can be processed and issued as a permit.**

- F. **Filing Fee** - Fees vary based on what is being constructed and the size of any structures. The planning and plan review deposit portion of the total permit fee must be paid when the application is filed. The balance is to be paid at the time the permit is issued. For fee information, call us at 781-5600 and ask for a permit technician, or refer to the information bulletin "Guide to Residential Permit Fees."

- G. **Manufactured Homes and Moved Buildings** - Applications for these permits must include a floor plan and two sets of State approved Tie-down or Permanent Foundation plans. The remaining requirements (shown on the Construction Permit Submittal Checklist) are required to begin the permit approval process, including any site grading.

If you are moving a building onto a site, a "moved building relocation" inspection must be requested and completed before an application can be accepted. The building will be inspected and a "Building Relocation Correction List" will be prepared. The existing location of the building must be included on the application. Two photos of the structure showing front and side views are also required.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Bring all the required plans, documents, & information to the planning and building department permit center for submittal. If you are notified that the plans you submitted need correction, you can pick them up and resubmit them once corrections have been made. You will be contacted when your permit is ready. You can then pick up your permit and pay the balance of your fees. For permit status, call 781-5600 and ask for a permit technician, or refer to our website.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS?

To process your application, the following steps must be completed. Many of these steps take place concurrently.

- A. **Initial Review** - This step will determine if your project is allowed within the land use category (zoning), set your fees, check your project for completeness, check requirements for setbacks and height, identify any other agencies that need to review your project and identify the initial conditions on your permit application.
- B. **Address Check** - This will determine if the street address associated with your project is consistent with the county addressing system and if your project must go through the road naming process. (For more information, refer to the information bulletin "Guide to the Road Naming Process").
- C. **Public Works Review** - The County Public Works Department will review the project to identify curb, gutter, sidewalk, drainage, waste disposal requirements and determine if you need any encroachment permits.
- D. **Fire Department Review** - The fire department that will serve your project will determine if your project requires a fire safety plan, which might include improved access to your site, a water storage tank, and other fire prevention measures.
- E. **Land Use Review/Zoning Clearance** - This review will determine if your project is in compliance with land use permit conditions you were required to fulfill before beginning construction. (For more information, refer the information bulletin "Guide to Condition Compliance".)
- F. **Site Inspection** - The building inspector will visit the site to determine any obvious physical problems at the site, drainage or special soils testing, and any existing land use violations. You will be provided with site ID signs at the time you apply for your permit. These

signs must be posted at the project site to assist the building inspector in locating the property. They must be posted in a conspicuous location, easily visible from the main road leading to the property. If the property is difficult to locate, it may be necessary to use more than one sign. You should post the signs soon after you submit your application.

- G. **Plan Review** - Plan review is completed to confirm that your plans comply with construction codes and land use regulations, and to provide you with a list of any necessary corrections.
- H. **Other Agency Review** - Agencies that are required by state or local law to review your plans, such as the County Health Department, Air Pollution Control District and Cal Trans, may require that additional measures be met before or during the construction process.
- I. **Permit Issuance** - Once you have completed all plan corrections, all conditions have been met, and your final fees are paid, your construction permit may be issued.

HOW LONG WILL MY APPLICATION REMAIN VALID?

Your application for a construction permit is valid for 360 days from the date you submitted the application. If a permit has not been issued within that time, the application will expire. An extension of 180 days may be granted upon written request. In order to renew an application after expiration, you need to resubmit plans and pay a new plan review fee.

WHEN CAN I START WORK?

It is very important that no work be done on the building site until the permit is actually issued. This prohibition includes grading, all proposed construction, or moving a manufactured home onto the site. The first site inspection, completed prior to issuance, often reveals special problems that may require changes to the proposed plans. This is one reason why it is very important that no work be done to the site prior to issuance.

HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE?

Construction permits can usually be issued within two months of submittal if the application and plans are complete, and the applicant responds promptly to all requests for information. Applications are only valid for one year from the time they are submitted, so it is important that you provide any necessary revisions or corrections in a timely manner. You can request, in writing, a one-time 180-day extension

WILL I NEED MORE THAN ONE CONSTRUCTION PERMIT?

A permit is needed for each separate structure (e.g. house, detached garage, swimming pool). If your project requires major grading, a separate permit will be required.

This guide is designed to provide general information only. It is not a county ordinance or policy and has no legal effect. The general plan and other chapters of the San Luis Obispo County Code are the official regulations of the county. Those documents, rather than this guide, are the only legal basis for assessing how county regulations affect property development.

Construction Permit Process Outline

