BUILDING CODES TOOLKIT

Checklist to Acquire a Building Permit

Purpose: This document equips and helps property owners understand the "general" process for acquiring a building permit prior to performing new construction, rebuilding, or mitigation work. It should not be used as a substitute for understanding the codes and regulations that govern your community. Alterations, additions and remodeling projects may not require all drawings and submittals listed. However, in certain circumstances, a design professional may be needed to create a signed and sealed set of plans before submitting for a building permit. The details of every project should be reviewed for specific compliance with your respective local codes and regulations.

Target User: Property owners. The services of a licensed architect, engineer and/or general contractor are strongly recommended. However, by understanding the requirements, you may be able to assist in gathering the required information to help streamline the process.

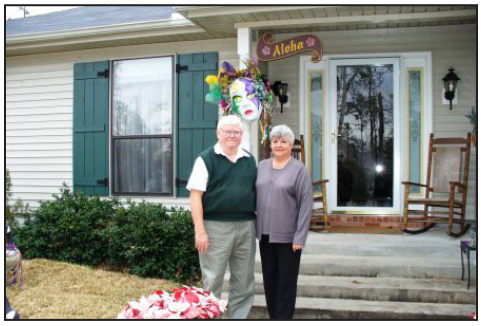


Photo Source Best Practices Portfolio/FEMA.

When their home, built largely to FEMA mitigation recommendations, had already withstood the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina. Raymond J. Sheehy felt confident that mitigation measures would help keep his home safe when Hurricane Katrina hammered the Gulf Coast with 135-mile per hour (mph) winds on August 29, 2005. He was right.

1. Create Project Plan

As the property owner, you must decide the scope of your project and the expertise that is required in order to complete it successfully. Complex projects, such as new construction, will require the assistance of an architect and/or engineer to plan and create the designs. The design planning process is also a good opportunity for you to inquire about mitigation techniques that could be integrated as part of the project to reduce any future risks from natural hazards and their effects. Most mitigation techniques are a lot less expensive to apply to structures if they are integrated as part of the property's scheduled maintenance and upgrade.

You also need to decide whether to employ the services of a general contractor to carry out the construction process of your project. It is strongly recommended that you hire a general contractor for new construction, rebuilding, or mitigation work. Consult your local code official if you have any questions when planning the scope of your project and determining whether you should hire a design professional or general contractor.

- ☐ Project plan (*See Basic Project Planning Template*)
- ☐ *Checklist of Questions to Ask Your General Contractor*

FEMA
BUILDING CODES TOOLKIT
Basic Project Planning Template

See the Basic Project Planning Template for information about the basic planning elements of a construction project.

2. Pre-Application Meeting with Local Code Official

Local code officials can provide advice on how to make your project a success and avoid potential problems that could cost you time and money. Discussing plans with a code official will help determine whether you need a permit for your project, if there are other local requirements that need to be met, and what documents are required for your application.

Permits are "generally" required for the following:

- ☐ New construction of buildings or structures
- ☐ Mitigation or retrofit work
- ☐ Alterations, repairs or addition to existing buildings or structures
- ☐ Rehabilitation of historic properties
- ☐ Electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems

Note: The above list of construction projects is not all inclusive; please consult your local code official to determine specific requirements for your project.

Photo Source Amanda Bicknell/FEMA.

A county official inspects the wiring in a FEMA supplied mobile home in California.

3. Complete and Submit Building Permit Application

After consulting with a local code official on requirements, ensure that you have all the necessary forms, documents, and plans needed for submitting your building permit request. The materials should be detailed enough so that the staff reviewing them would be able to construct the project by easily visualizing every detail. Generally, the following documents are required:

- ☐ Local application form and fee
- ☐ Project plan (*See Basic Project Planning Template*)
- ☐ Other potential local requirements: maps; photographs; architectural/ engineering designs; construction plans; energy calculations; and/or post disaster damage inspection (i.e. substantial damage estimation for flood)

Photo Source City of Casper WY

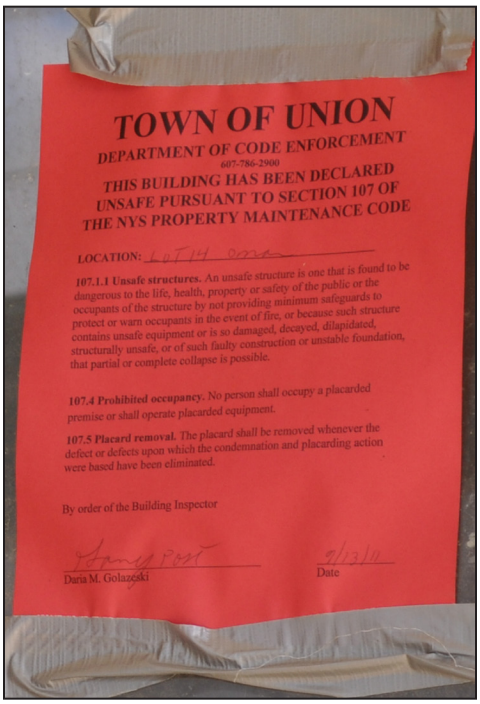
Building Inspection/Permitting Division of the City of Casper, WY.

4. Permit Review Process

Once the necessary application documents and fees are submitted, the local code official will review the proposed project and determine if it is in compliance with local building code, zoning, environmental, and construction requirements. For new or complex projects, the building department will evaluate your project designs during the permit review process. Due to the detail involved in such construction designs, the review process can be quite lengthy depending upon the community. To avoid permit and construction delays, work closely with your design professional to ensure all required documents are complete and submitted as part of the permitting application; leaving ample time for review.

If your plan meets these requirements, a permit is issued. If not, the local code official will identify items that need to be addressed and may recommend solutions to help correct the issues found in your application. Once you meet all of the conditions and/or make the necessary corrections, your building permit will be approved. Generally, you will need the following during the review process:

- ☐ Application submission confirmation (i.e. receipts, etc.)
- ☐ Copies of application submitted
- ☐ Local code official contact information



TOWN OF UNION
DEPARTMENT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT
607-786-2900
THIS BUILDING HAS BEEN DECLARED UNSAFE PURSUANT TO SECTION 107 OF THE NYS PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

LOCATION: Lot 14 Ocra

107.1.1 Unsafe structures. An unsafe structure is one that is found to be dangerous to the life, health, property or safety of the public or the occupants of the structure by not providing minimum safeguards to protect or warn occupants in the event of fire, or because such structure contains unsafe equipment or is so damaged, decayed, dilapidated, structurally unsafe, or of such faulty construction or unstable foundation, that partial or complete collapse is possible.

107.4 Prohibited occupancy. No person shall occupy a placarded premise or shall operate placarded equipment.

107.5 Placard removal. The placard shall be removed whenever the defect or defects upon which the condemnation and placarding action were based have been eliminated.

By order of the Building Inspector

Daria M. Golazeski — Date 9/13/10

Photo Source Elissa Jun/FEMA.

This building has been declared unsafe by the Department of Code Enforcement after the flooding.

5. Obtain Building Permit

When your permit is issued, you have legal permission to start construction in accordance with the approved plans, local building code requirements, and other applicable laws and regulations. Based on the size of the project, a fee may be collected to cover the cost of the application, the review, and the inspection process. Separate permits may be required for electrical, plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning work, or other locally required speciaties. Generally, the building department provides the following documents once a permit is approved:

- ☐ Building permit
- ☐ Job/Inspection card
- ☐ Set of stamped/approved construction documents

6. On-site Inspections

Inspections are conducted to ensure the work being completed conforms to the parameters outlined in the permit, local codes, city/county approved plans, etc. You will be advised by the local code official as to (approximately) how many inspections may be needed for your project. Throughout this process, maintain a strong coordination with your local code official to ensure proper compliance with local requirements and to minimize any costly mistakes. If you have hired a contractor, this will be the responsibility of the contractor, but you should review to make sure inspection approvals are secured. Generally, the following documents are needed as part of the on-site inspections:

- ☐ Building permit
- ☐ Job/Inspection card issued by Permitting
- ☐ Set of construction documents stamped/approved by Permitting

Photo Source: Frank Niemeir/FEMA

Dan Warren (left) and Robert Lord fix a roof on a home that had been damaged in Crisfield, Md. as cleanup continues after Hurricane Sandy came through the area.

7. Final Approval

Once construction is complete and code compliance is determined, the local code official will provide you with documentation of final approval. You will have the personal satisfaction of knowing your project was done correctly and meets the minimum standards of compliance. In regard to safety, you can always do more, but you cannot afford to do less. Safe building practices help to protect not only you, your family, and your home, but also your entire community.

- ☐ Certificate of Zoning Compliance
- ☐ Certificate of Completion
- ☐ Utility Certificate
- ☐ Certificate of Occupancy

Notes: