

# Frequently Asked Questions (General)

## When is a permit required?

Permits are required before starting work that is not exempt from the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). Work including, but not limited to the below items requires a building permit.

(1) Construction or demolition of a building or structure, (2) installations or alterations that involve any wall or structural component, (3) changing the designed use of a building, installation, (4) removal or disturbing any materials containing asbestos during construction, additions, or demolition (exemptions exist for Single Family Dwellings), or (5) replacement of any system or component within a building or structure not exempted by the USBC, (See Below)

Examples: A permit is required for the following work:

- Construction of new buildings/structures

- Constructing/replacing a deck

- Finishing a basement

- Building additions to existing structures

- Installing new systems (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, gas)

- Storage/Utility buildings (with or without electrical) that exceed 150 square feet

- Installation of swimming pools (above and in-ground) where pool depth is 24 inches or deeper

- Replacement of gas or oil equipment (gas or oil furnaces, gas water heaters, etc)

- Installation of new fuel tanks

- Construction of retaining walls supporting 24 inches or more of unbalanced fill

## When is a permit **NOT** required?

Common exemptions that **do not** require a permit are as follows:

- (1) Electrical equipment that operates at less than 50 volts (except for smoke/fire systems)
- (2) Detached accessory structures (under 150 sq. ft.) used for storage/utility purposes.  
(However, an electrical permit is required if electrical wiring is installed)
- (3) Tents under 900 sq. ft with occupant loads under 50 people
- (4) Fences and privacy walls that are not part of a building, structure, or swimming pool barrier. Exempt walls must be under six feet in height.
- (5) Retaining walls supporting **less than** two feet of unbalanced fill (soil)
- (6) Swimming Pools **less than** 24 inches deep
- (7) Replacement of existing LP containers of the same capacity and/or associated regulators
- (8) When ordinary repairs are made such as:
  - (a) replacement of windows and doors in Single Family Dwellings,
  - (b) replacement of plumbing fixtures without alterations or relocation,
  - (c) replacement of electrical switches, dimmers, 15 or 20 AMP 125 volt receptacles, lighting outlets, and ceiling (paddle) fans in Single Family Dwellings,
  - (d) replacement of mechanical appliances that are not fueled by gas or oil,
  - (e) replacement of roof coverings or siding in Single Family Dwellings,
  - (f) installation or replacement of floor finishings, cabinetry, paint, or wall paper

If you require clarification if concerning work requiring a building permit, please contact the Franklin County Building Inspections Department between 8:00-4:30 Monday through Friday at (540)483-3047.

## What are the penalties if I do not apply for a permit?

If it is determined that work requiring a permit is being made without valid permits, the permit fee will be doubled up to an amount of \$2,500 per Section 5-27 (u) of the Franklin County Code. Additionally, engineering may be required to verify work made prior/without inspections complies with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VAUSBC).

## What types of permits are issued by the Building Inspections Department?

The three main classifications of permits are, (1) Residential, (2) Non- Residential, and (3) Miscellaneous Permits. Permit applications are available for each of the above listed categories. These applications have either a cover page or other comments on the application to assist the applicant with permit requirements.

## What is required for a permit?

Requirements for permits will vary based upon the intended scope of work (ie. a Construction Permit from the Health Department is required when a dwelling is to be constructed, but not required for additions such as a sunroom or alterations such as finishing a basement).

- (1.) A **completed** Building permit application corresponding to the type of work will be required in addition to approvals/permits from other related departments (Health Department, Planning and Zoning Department, etc.).
- (2.) Where additions or new buildings are to be constructed, Zoning approvals must be received from the FC Planning and Zoning Department, the Town of Rocky Mount, or the Town of Boones Mill.  
*Note: The Franklin County Planning and Zoning Department requires a Land Use permit for new buildings, structures, or additions on parcels located in the County, but outside of Town limits.*
- (3.) Proof of Land Ownership or a signed and dated letter from the land owner authorizing the permit is required for all permits.
- (4.) For Single Family Residential, quarter inch per foot scaled plans should accompany the permit application, with a minimum of one floor plan per level and a detailed foundation plan (with dimensions and cut sections).  
Note: Single Family homes over 15,000 sq. ft. require sealed plans.

**\*\*Non-Residential Building Permits require plans to be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Building Department prior to the issuance of the permit. The review process typically requires two to four weeks. Some Non-Residential permits may require sealed plans by a Virginia licensed Registered Design Professional (Architect).**

## What are some of the building requirements specific to Franklin County?

According to the Codes which are adopted by the State of Virginia in the VA USBC, here are some of the requirements for Franklin County:

1. Frost Line: The frost line for Franklin County is 18 inches deep.
2. Snow Load: The ground snow load for Franklin County is 25 lbs. per sq. ft.
3. Seismic Zone: Franklin County is located in a seismic zone "B".
4. Wind Load: Franklin County is located in a 90 mph wind zone.
5. Radon: Franklin County is located in the intermediate zone for radon. Radon mitigation methods are not required.
6. Soil Policy: Franklin County does not have extensive amounts of "shrink/swell" soil. However, if expansive/collapsing soils are encountered, then a soil evaluation is required.

## Who may apply for a Building Permit?

Landowners, contractors, or agents may apply for the Building Permit. If someone other than the landowner applies for a "Demolitions or New Structure" permit (other than accessory/secondary buildings), a notarized affidavit (included with the permit applications) must be completed by the landowner to authorize the work. The notary public is not required to be registered in Virginia for landowners who live out of the state.

## What are the hours of operation within the Building Inspections Office?

The Building Inspections Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm excluding State Holidays and other times approved by the Board of Supervisors. Applications for permits may be presented between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.

## What forms of payment are acceptable?

Currently cash and checks are the acceptable means of payment. Checks should be made payable to "**County of Franklin**".

## When are requested inspections scheduled?

Inspection requests received up until 8:00 am (on voice mail) are currently scheduled for the same day if so requested. Requests made after 8:00 are scheduled for the next working day. **Future enhancements within the software's inspection request system may require the cut-off time for inspections to be modified.**

**Note:** *Inspections may not be completed on the day requested if the inspection volume is excessive. Rescheduled inspections are prioritized by inspectors on the following work day. In the event that the inspector does not complete an inspection on the requested day, that does not authorize the owner or contractor to proceed without receiving department approval. Individuals who violate this policy are subject to Notices of Violation, referral to the Virginia Board for Contractors, and other legal action as determined necessary by the Building Inspections Department. Also engineering may be required at the owner's/contractor's expense to certify that work not inspected by the Franklin County Building Inspection's Department is acceptable to the requirements of the VA USBC.*

**Note:** Inspectors are unable to provide specific times for inspections due to variables such as:

- (1) types of inspections
- (2) # of inspections per location
- (3) distance between inspections
- (4) documentation (correction lists or notices)

Please make inspection locations available throughout the day. If additional security is desired please provide key location information with the inspection request. Locked/inaccessible locations are subject to a \$45.00 reinspection fee. This fee is to be paid before a reinspection or another type of inspection is scheduled.

**Note:** Please have unattended pets contained so that animals will not interfere with the inspection.

## What are the fees associated with permits?

See the fee schedule and descriptions currently listed on the Building Inspections website page. Briefly, new construction and additions are based on a flat fee per square foot, while alterations are based on the estimated cost of the work.

**Note: For alterations permits only:** When providing the estimated value/cost you may deduct the cost of the following items from the alterations total. (1) Replacement of Plumbing Fixtures, (2) Installation or replacement of Floor Finishes, (3) Replacement of many ceiling and wall finishes in non-fire rated locations, (4) Installation of repair cabinetry or trim, (5) Application of paint or wallpaper. (Some residential buildings may be eligible for additional exclusions for roofing, siding, or device/equipment replacement. Inquiries are suggested.)

### **When is the best time to speak with an inspector?**

Inspector's office hours are in the mornings between the hours of 8:00 until 9:30. After this time they are in the field and unable to take calls. Please leave a detailed message or call the following business day during the time specified above.

### **What do I need when scheduling an inspection?**

You will need the building permit number which is located on the placard or receipt provided at the time of permit issuance. For temporary or permanent electrical power inspections, the nine digit AEP work order number will be required in addition to the permit number before the inspection can be scheduled.

### **What inspections are required on my permit?**

When the building permit is issued a list of common inspections associated with your permit type may be located on the customer copy of the building permit. As a rule of thumb, inspections must be made prior to the Placement of Concrete, Concealment, or Occupancy.

### **What codes are adopted in Virginia?**

On May 1, 2008 Virginia adopted the following codes *in addition to State amendments* located in the 2006 edition of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code:

2006 International Building Code	2006 International Residential Code
2006 International Plumbing Code	2006 International Mechanical Code
2006 International Energy Conservation Code	2006 Fuel Gas Code
2005 National Electrical Code	

\*\*\* For the 2006 series, Virginia Amendments have been incorporated into International codes creating **ICC publications** tailored specifically to the State of Virginia (does not include the National Electric Code). These editions of the code are recommended over International versions because they include Virginia specific amendments. Examples are:

2006 Virginia Building Code	2006 Virginia Residential Code
2006 Virginia Plumbing Code	2006 Virginia Mechanical Code
2006 Virginia Fuel Gas Code	

## Where can I access a Code Book?

The Franklin County Library has 2003 code books available to better serve citizens. The library will soon have 2006 versions of the Building Codes. Our department does not have code books available for sale. Code books can be purchased from the International Code Council at 1-888-ICC-SAFE or [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org)

## What is a Manufactured Home and what are the differences between Manufactured Homes and Modular or “Stick Built” Homes?

Manufactured Homes are commonly referred to as mobile homes. They are often constructed as a single, double, or triple wide. Manufactured Homes are not constructed to the requirements of the Building Code, instead they are constructed in accordance with HUD regulations. The HUD Code is administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, using independent third party inspection agencies for enforcement. Every HUD Code manufactured home is built in the factory. It has a label affixed to the exterior of the home which indicated that the home has been designed, constructed, tested, and inspected to comply with federal standards. Systems included during the construction of the Manufactured Home include the Framing, Electrical, Plumbing, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Systems. These systems may require additional work during the set-up process. All work made on site not covered by the Manufacturer’s Installation Manual must comply with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Manufactured Homes are designed to be set up as specified in the manufacturer’s installation instructions. Any deviations from the requirements established in the Installation Manual require accompanying engineering from a Virginia licensed RDP (Registered Design Professional). Foundations/supports for Manufactured Homes normally consist of *interior* piers that receive the weight of the home above via steel I-beams that run the length of the home. *The presence of the metal frame does not always constitute a Manufactured Home; On-Frame Modulares (which are constructed to the requirements of the State’s Building Code) can also be designed to be supported on a metal chasis.*

**Note: Any decks, additions, or other attachments to any home on a metal chasis must be self supporting.**

## What steps are involved in obtaining of a Manufactured Home permit?

1. Approvals from the appropriate Planning and Zoning Departments must be received prior to the issuance of the Building Permit. This will be a Land Use Permit for parcels located in the County that are outside of the Towns of Rocky Mount or Boones Mill. For the Towns of Rocky Mount or Boones Mill, approvals from the respective Zoning Departments is required.
2. If the Manufactured Home is placed **over a basement**, signed and sealed plans from a Virginia licensed architect or engineer are required prior to the issuance of the permit.
3. Complete the applicable portions of a "Residential Permit Application"

## Other Suggestions

The Franklin County Building Inspections Department strongly suggests that:

1. All work should be made by contractors licensed in the State of Virginia. The specification on the license must match the work that is being contracted. (ie. A Building Contractor, BLD is not licensed to do Electrical Contracting; An ELE specification would be required.)  
  
**(a.) Hiring an unlicensed contractor** for jobs totaling more than \$1000.00 is a Class I misdemeanor. **Code of Virginia 54.1-1115**  
  
**(b.) Contracting work** totaling more than \$1000.00 without a Virginia Contractor's license is a Class I misdemeanor. **Code of Virginia 54.1-1115 & 54.1-1100**
2. The contractor's license should be verified through DPOR's contractor data base at: [www.dpor.state.va.us/regulantlookup](http://www.dpor.state.va.us/regulantlookup)
3. Job references should be required of contractors and inquiries to those references should be made, prior to hiring a contractor.
4. Plans should be provided, reviewed, and distributed among the owners, contractors, sub-contractors, and other workers so that the project is constructed as designed.
5. All change orders should be signed, dated, and documented in accordance with Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation requirements. A PDF version of the Board for Contractors Regulations can be downloaded at: [www.dpor.virginia.gov/dporweb/con\\_main.cfm](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/dporweb/con_main.cfm)