

Frequently Asked Questions



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❓ DO I REALLY NEED A PERMIT FOR SMALL PROJECTS?

Yes - most projects valued over \$5,000 require a permit, even if the work seems minor. For example, replacing a roof, upgrading an air conditioner, or remodeling a bathroom will most always need permits because of cost and safety considerations.

For projects under \$5,000, a permit may still be required if the work changes the structure, electrical, plumbing, or mechanical systems. Cosmetic work such as painting, flooring, or trim replacement generally does not require a permit.

❓ WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GET A PERMIT?

Unpermitted work can cost more in the long run:

- Stop-work orders and fines until a permit is obtained
- Costly rework if the completed job does not meet code
- Insurance complications - some insurers may deny claims for damages linked to unpermitted work
- Selling issues - buyers and lenders often require proof of permits and inspections

❓ HOW DO I APPLY FOR A PERMIT?

Most permits start with an application to Columbia County Building & Zoning Department. You may apply online or in person.

Applications usually require:

- A description of the project
- Construction drawings or site plans (when structural work is involved)
- Contractor information and license number (if hiring a contractor)
- Any zoning or floodplain documentation, if applicable

Once submitted, staff review the application for any other items needed and compliance with the Florida Building Code. If everything checks out, a permit is issued.

❓ WHO CAN PULL A PERMIT?

- Licensed contractors registered or certified in Florida
- Property owners working on their own home (acting as an "owner-builder")
 - Important: Owner-builders must follow all code requirements and may not hire unlicensed workers. By law, the owner accepts full liability for the project.

❓ HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A PERMIT?

Processing time depends on the project type and whether your application is complete.

- Simple permits (like reroofing or ac replacements) may be issued the same day
- Larger projects (new homes, additions, commercial buildings) may take several days or weeks because plans must be reviewed by multiple disciplines (structural, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, zoning, floodplain)

❓ DO PERMITS EXPIRE?

Yes. Under the Florida Building Code, permits generally expire if:

- Work does not start within 180 days of issuance, or
- There is no inspection activity for 180 days

Extensions may be granted if requested before the permit expires. Once expired, you may need to reapply and pay additional fees.

❓ HOW MUCH DO PERMITS COST? (FEES BELOW ARE FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY ONLY)

Permit fees depend on the type of project and its value:

- General rule: Projects valued over \$5,000 require a permit
- Minimum permit fee: \$104
- Electrical Permits: \$54 or \$79 depending on the scope of work
- Other permit types (building, plumbing, mechanical, roofing, etc.) are based on the project's value, square footage, or a set fee schedule

❓ WHAT INSPECTIONS ARE REQUIRED?

Every permitted project requires inspections to confirm compliance with code. Common inspections include:

- Footings and foundations
- Framing and structural connections
- Electrical, plumbing, and mechanical rough-in and finals
- Roofing and insulation
- Final inspection for overall completion

Inspections must be scheduled by the permit holder or contractor, and approval is required before moving to the next stage of work.

👉 STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

- Call **Columbia County Building Department** at 386-758-1008
- Visit: <https://www.columbiacountyfla.com> or scan QR Code for checklists, forms, and online applications.
- Our staff is here to guide you through the permitting process.

The Florida Building Code (Section 105) and Chapters 553 & 489, Florida Statutes, require permits and establish permitting, review, and inspection procedures. This handout summarizes common situations and is not a substitute for code text or legal advice. For statutory language and official code text, see the Florida Building Code and Florida Statutes.

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