

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BUILDING & ZONING PERMITS

(Pull out for future reference)

With spring right around the corner, it's natural that we begin to think about our future plans for home improvements. Putting up a retaining wall, replacing the roof, adding a privacy fence or swimming pool could be high on that list. But do these jobs require a building permit? One way to be absolutely sure is to call Code.Sys, Code Consulting, Inc., 321 Grant Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15209, at 1-877-821-0337. Code.Sys approves all commercial and residential construction in the Borough. Zoning Administrator, Robert Snyder can be reached by calling 412-781-0569, Ext. 16, during regular business hours. He will tell you that even though some work may not require a building permit, it does require a zoning permit.

The Borough of Etna, along with all the other Pennsylvania municipalities, abide by the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (as required by State law), a certain other State and Federal Laws and Etna Ordinance No. 1289 (as well as other local ordinances), which adopted rules handed down from the International Property Maintenance Code. The following is a partial list of residential and commercial work exempt from building permits:

ALL CONSTRUCTION REQUIRES A ZONING PERMIT WHETHER A BUILDING PERMIT IS REQUIRED OR NOT. ZONING PERMITS MAY BE ACQUIRED THROUGH THE BOROUGH OF ETNA, CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICE, AT A COST OF \$30.00.

(The following is from the Uniform Construction Code)

Residential work exempt from BUILDING permit: Permits shall not be required for the following. **EXEMPTION FROM THE PERMIT REQUIREMENTS OF THIS CODE SHALL NOT BE DEEMED TO GRANT AUTHORIZATION FOR ANY WORK TO BE DONE IN ANY MANNER IN VIOLATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THIS CODE OR ANY OTHER LAWS OR ORDINANCES OF THIS JURISDICTION.**

Building

1. One-story detached accessory structures provided the floor area does not exceed 1,000 square feet.
2. Fences not over 6 feet in height. Etna Zoning law has specific requirements which are as follows (a) A fence along the rear property line shall not exceed eight feet in height; (b) a fence located along the side property line shall not exceed six feet in height; (c) No fence higher than four feet shall be erected between the principal building and the street line.
3. Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge.
4. Water tanks supported directly upon grade in the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.
5. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not over any basement or story below.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
7. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.

8. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a one or two-family dwelling.
9. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

Commercial work exempt from permit. EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS OF THIS CODE SHALL NOT BE DEEMED TO GRANT AUTHORIZATION FOR ANY WORK TO BE DONE IN ANY MANNER IN VIOLATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THIS CODE OR ANY OTHER LAWS OR ORDINANCES OF THIS JURISDICTION. Permits shall not be required for the following:

Building:

1. One story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses-provided floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
2. Fences not over 6 feet high (see above for further regulations regarding fences).
3. Oil derricks.
4. Retaining walls which are not over 4 feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding class I, II or III-A liquids.
5. Water tanks supported directly on grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.
6. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above grade and that are not located over a basement or story below it and which are not part of any accessible route.
7. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
8. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.
9. Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3, occupancy, as applicable in Sections 101.2, which are less than 24 inches deep, do not exceed 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.
10. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes and not including service systems.
11. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one and two family dwellings.
12. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support of Group R-3, as applicable in Section 101.2, and Group U occupancies.
13. Movable cases, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches in height.

After reading this, if you still have questions, it is better to “ask first” than begin your project and face problems later. It’s also a good idea to plan accordingly. Apply for your permit a few days a head of time. It’s not always possible to receive a permit the same day that you apply.

All of these rules are mandated and upheld to ensure our community is a safe place to live. They help to increase our property values and maintain a sense of pride in the appearance of our homes and property.

Good luck in your home improvement projects!