



Construction Exempt from a Building Permit

Essential Handout

#03

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SKAGITCOUNTYWA.GOV

Skagit County

Planning and
Development Services



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This information only
applies to property
within unincorporated
Skagit County and does
not apply to property
within incorporated city
limits.

This provides information about construction that is exempt from obtaining a building permit.

If the construction is in a Special Flood Hazard Area, Designated Floodway, or Critical Area it is not exempt from a permit regardless of the size.

Do I need a permit for a deck?

If the deck meets the following requirements a permit is not required.

1. The walking surface is not more than 30 inches above grade.
2. The surface does not total more than 200 square feet.
3. The deck may be covered but must remain independent from the main structure.
4. The walking surface is being replaced.

Do I need a permit to build a shed?

If the shed meets the following requirements, a permit is not required.

1. Must not exceed 1 story in height.
2. Must not exceed 200 square feet.
3. All setback requirements must adhere to SCC 14.16.810.
4. No plumbing is being proposed.
5. May not be used for sleeping purposes.

Do fences need a permit?

- Fences that are not more than 7 feet in height from grade do not require a building permit per the IRC and IBC. See Essential Handout: Fence #11
- All fences must comply with the setback requirements of SCC 14.16.810.

Do retaining walls need a permit?

- Retaining walls that do not exceed 4 feet in height, measuring from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, do not require a permit.
- If the retaining wall supports a surcharge/load that is more than the level fill material behind the wall, a permit will be required. See Essential Handout: Retaining Wall #14.

Common Structures that are exempt from building permits.

- Replacing roof coverings, or adding just 1 layer of covering, siding and residential windows without framing modifications. Note: buildings having such work done in the floodplain would require a flood permit.
- Window awnings under 400 lbs. that are supported by an exterior wall of a single-family residence or mercantile occupancy. Shall not project more than 54 inches.
- Playground equipment that is compliant with ASTM F1487; F1148 or U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Handout for Public Playground Safety.
- Above grade prefabricated swimming pools for residential use that does not exceed 5000 gallons.
- Self-contained cellular tower generators with no external fuel tank and located within a fenced area.
- Solar photovoltaic panel installation on an existing roof of a single-family residence.
- Wall mounted signs that do not project from the wall more than 6 inches.
- Monument signs that are not more than 7 feet in height and adhere to setback requirements.
- Membrane Structures (as defined in the IBC):
 - It is used exclusively for the protection or propagation of plants other than marijuana that are not on display for public viewing or sales.
 - It is located a minimum of 20 feet from any property line or other structure and meets standard setback requirements.
 - The membrane material is < 20 mil (0.5 mm) in thickness.
 - Multiple membrane structures located on the same lot and having an aggregate floor area exceeding 12,000 square feet must maintain a minimum of 60-foot clear yards on all sides of the structure.
 - Stormwater management is installed per SCC 14.32
- Work located primarily in a public way, including but not limited to grading, trenching, vaults/walls, install and maintenance of public utility towers and poles, install and maintenance of mechanical equipment not specifically regulated in this code, underground utilities, and hydraulic flood control structures.

Although a building permit may not be required, you must still comply with building, stormwater and land use codes, including setbacks, flood requirements, and requirements to obtain any other types of permits required by law.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

You may contact us if you have any questions via:

Online: [Ask a Permit Tech](#)

Remember, asking questions first can save lots of headaches, heartaches, and money!