



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services  
**BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS PER ADOPTIVE ORDINANCE**  
**BUILDING DIVISION**

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**SEC. 91.1.105. PERMITS.**

(a) Except as provided in section 91.1.105.2, **no person shall erect, construct, enlarge, alter, repair, maintain, move, improve, remove, convert or demolish** a building or structure regulated by this chapter without a separate permit for each building or structure, issued by the building official. This section shall not be construed to require separate permits for a dwelling and auxiliary buildings or structures on the same property which are described in a building permit application, plot plan and other drawings.

(b) No person shall construct a **residential driveway** and no person shall cause or allow a **residential driveway** to be constructed on property owned or controlled by the person without having obtained a permit as provided in this chapter. A person shall not be required to obtain a separate permit for a **residential driveway** ancillary or accessory to the construction of a single family dwelling or duplex.

(c) No person shall do any grading, for which a grading permit is required, without a **grading permit** issued as provided in Title 8, Division 7 of this code. When the grading permit is issued by the building official a building permit shall be obtained to cover all retaining walls, drainage structures and related items (other than standard terrace drains and similar facilities). The building permit fee shall be based on the total valuation of the retaining walls, drainage structures and related items.

(d) No permits shall be issued for construction on a site where a grading permit is required until the **rough grading** has been inspected and approved, acceptable compaction and other soil reports have been approved and until all plan check fees required under this code have been paid.

(e) No permit shall be issued on a site where **grading or public improvements** installation work is being performed subject to the approval of the **Director of Public Works** until the Director of Public Works notifies the Director of Planning and Development Services in writing that the grading or public improvement work has been satisfactorily completed.

**SEC. 91.1.105.2. WORK EXEMPT FROM PERMIT.**

(a) A **building permit** shall not be required for the following:

(1) Patio covers, carports, and horse shade covers, when accessory to R-3 occupancies and having up to 300 square feet of projected roof area. Such structures shall have minimum 6 feet of clearance from other patio covers, carports, and horse shade covers. Additionally such structures shall have at least 3 feet of clearance from all property lines and comply with all requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance, including setback from property line requirements.

(2) Recreation and athletic equipment, excluding buildings and swimming pools, that comply with the requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance.

(3) One-story detached accessory buildings, including sea cargo containers, used as non-habitable space, such as tool or storage sheds, playhouses, agricultural buildings and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet and no plumbing, electrical or mechanical permit is required for the structure. Such accessory buildings and containers shall have minimum 6 feet of clearance from other buildings and shall be subject to County Zoning Ordinance requirements and limitations.

(4) Fences and free standing masonry walls not over 6 feet high that comply with the fencing and landscaping regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance. A building permit shall also not be required for open fences up to eight feet high, where allowed by the County Zoning Ordinance, provided the uppermost two feet consists only of barbed or razor wire and necessary support elements placed at an angle to the vertical for security purposes.

(5) Oil derricks.

(6) Moveable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches high.

(7) Retaining walls not over three feet in height, measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding flammable liquids.

(8) Water tanks supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed two to one, or the capacity does not exceed 10,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed one and one-half to one. Water tanks shall comply with the requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance for accessory structures.

(9) Platforms, walks and driveways not more than 30 inches above grade, as measured from grade to the highest point of the platform, walk or driveway directly above, and not over any basement or story below.

(10) Painting and papering and similar finish work.

(11) Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.

(12) Window awnings on Group R-3 or Group U occupancies supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

(13) Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 18 inches deep, do not exceed 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.

(14) Single pole television and radio antennas supported on roofs. Dish antennas supported on the ground when they comply with the accessory structure setback regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance.

(15) Public utility towers and poles.

(16) Any portable metal hanger less than 2,000 square feet in size, located on a County-owned airport used only for parking aircraft and bearing evidence of approval by the California Department of Motor Vehicles for movement on any highway. This structure shall, as an integral part of the basic construction, be equipped with a hitch or coupling device for towing. It shall accommodate, without further major structural change, wheel and axle assemblies which will provide this structure with a safe means of portability. No water, sanitary facilities or electrical installation shall be allowed in this structure and it shall be equipped with permanent ventilation as required for any Group S-2 occupancy.

(17) Electric light poles, flag poles and antennas not over 35 feet in height above finished grade when fully extended which comply with the County Zoning Ordinance.

(18) Agricultural shade structures where the shade is provided by a fabric or plastic film material, and agricultural crop protection structures which are constructed with a framework of metal or plastic hoops that are covered with a flexible plastic film, provided that all these structures comply with all requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance.

(b) Unless otherwise exempted by this code, separate electrical, plumbing and mechanical permits may be required for the above exempted items. It is the responsibility of any person performing the work and any person hiring another person to perform the work to ascertain whether a permit is required from the building official before the work begins.

(c) An **electrical permit** shall not be required for the following:

- (1) Minor repair work such as repairing a snap switch, replacing a fuse, repairing a lamp socket or a receptacle.
- (2) Replacing a lamp or connecting a portable appliance to a permanently installed, suitable receptacle.
- (3) The installation, alteration or repair of wiring, devices, appliances or equipment for the operation of signals or the transmission of intelligence (not including the control of lighting or appliance circuits) where the wiring, devices, appliances or equipment operate at voltage not exceeding 25 volts between conductors and do not include generating or transforming equipment capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.
- (4) The installation, alteration or repair of electric wiring, a device, an appliance or equipment installed by the United States, State of California, a school district, county, city or a "local agency" as defined in California Government Code section 53090, whose facility is exclusively for the production, generation, storage, or transmission of water, wastewater or electrical energy.
- (5) Repair, installation or removal of any appliance used for household purposes in a residential building. A permit shall be required, however, for connecting such an appliance to the source of electrical energy, unless the connection is made to a permanently installed receptacle.
- (6) Electrical equipment used for radio or television transmission. However, a permit is required for equipment or wiring for a power supply and the installation of a tower or antenna.
- (7) The installation of any temporary system required for testing or servicing of electrical equipment and apparatus.

(d) A **plumbing permit** shall not be required for the following:

- (1) Installing a replacement water heater with no change to the unit type or servicing utilities when performed by a California licensed plumbing contractor.
- (2) Installing a toilet, bidet, showerhead or faucet inside a building when the installation is limited to repairing or replacing the fixture and is performed by the building owner or a plumbing contractor licensed by the State of California. The work shall be limited to plumbing on the service side of the fixture's water supply shut-off valve and shall not include work within any floor, ceiling, or wall cavity or include any fixture with a connection to a gas line or electrical service.
- (3) Stopping a leak in a drain or water, soil, waste or vent pipe. If, however, a concealed trap, drain pipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the defective material, the work shall be considered new work and require a permit and inspection under this chapter.
- (4) Clearing a stoppage or repairing a leak in a pipe, valve or fixture or removing and reinstalling a water closet, as long as the repairs do not involve or require the replacement of or rearrangement of a valve, pipe or fixture.

(e) A **mechanical permit** shall not be required for the following:

- (1) Replacing a faulty control, valve, drier or filter in any heating, ventilation, air conditioning or refrigeration equipment or repairing the equipment, as long as the work does not require removing the equipment from its installed position.

- (2) Installing a temperature control, repairing a leak or recharging a refrigeration compressor or system.
  - (3) Servicing or repairing an ice machine.
  - (4) Repairing a unit refrigeration system freezer.
  - (5) Repairing any unit-system refrigeration or refrigerated drinking fountain.
  - (6) A portable heating appliance, ventilation equipment, cooling unit or evaporate cooler.
  - (7) A closed system of steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
  - (8) A self-contained refrigeration system.
  - (9) Replacing any part that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe.
- (f) Exemption from the permit requirements of this chapter **shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner that violates this chapter or any other County law.**