

When is a building permit not required?

A permit is required to construct, enlarge, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy of a building or structure. It is also required to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system.

Below are examples of work not requiring a building permit. However, it is highly suggested verifying with other Divisions for additional reviews/authorization required for the specific work.

1. Other than storm shelters, one-story detached accessory structures, provided that the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
*This does not exempt **attached** structures regardless of size which can include patio covers, arbors, pergolas, etc. Contact the Planning Division for zoning requirements on setbacks and maximum height permitted (refer to Zoning Ordinance 17.22.020).*
2. Fences, other than swimming pool barriers, not over 7 feet high.
Contact the Planning Division for zoning requirements on setbacks and maximum height permitted (refer to Zoning Ordinance 17.22.060).
3. Oil derricks.
4. 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 or impounding Class I, II or III-A liquids.
Contact the Planning Division for zoning and setback requirements. Retaining walls must meet regulations for height in the front and street side setback.
5. 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 2 to 1.
Contact the Planning Division for zoning and setback requirements prior to installation.
6. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an 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 that are less than 24 inches deep, are not greater than 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.
Multi-family and non-residential swimming pools shall require approval from the Yolo County Health Department.
10. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems.
11. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one- and two-family dwellings.
12. Window awnings in Group R-3/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. Nonfixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches in height.

Community Development Department | Building Division

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Work Exempt from Building Permits

14. For Group R-3 occupancies including one- and two-family dwellings: Decks not exceeding 200 square feet in area, that are not more than 30 inches above grade at any point, are not attached to a dwelling or townhouse, and do not serve the exit door required by Section R311.4 of the California Residential Code.

(2025 California Residential Code, R105.2 – Work exempt from permit. 2025 California Building Code, 105.2 – Work exempt from permit)

Plumbing, electrical and mechanical work associated with the above exempted items requires separate applicable permits. 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.

Questions? Call the Building Division at (916) 617-4645, Option 1

When is an electrical permit not required?

An electrical permit is not required for the following:

1. Listed cord and plug connected temporary decorative lighting.
2. Reinstallation of attachment plug receptacles, not the outlets.
3. Repair or replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location.
4. Installation or maintenance of communications wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus or equipment.

(2025 California Electrical Code, 89.108.4.1 – Permits)

When is a mechanical permit not required?

A mechanical permit is not required for the following:

1. A portable heating appliance, portable ventilating equipment, a portable cooling unit or a portable evaporative cooler.
2. A closed system of steam, hot or chilled water piping within heating or cooling equipment regulated by the California Mechanical Code.
3. Replacement of a component part that does not alter its original approval and is in accordance with other applicable requirements of the California Mechanical Code.
4. Refrigerating equipment that is part of the equipment for which a permit has been used pursuant to the requirements of the California Mechanical Code.
5. A unit refrigerating system.

(2025 California Mechanical Code, 104.2 – Exempt Work)

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When is a plumbing permit not required?

A plumbing permit is not required for the following:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided, however, that a trap, drainpipe, soil, waste, or vent pipe become defective, and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, the same shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be procured and inspection made as provided in the California Plumbing Code.
2. The clearing of stoppages, including the removal and reinstallation of water closets or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes, or fixtures.

(California Plumbing Code, 104.2 – Exempt Work)