Building Inspections
Environmental Health
(828) 894-3739
Call in: Office hours 8:00am – 4:00pm

Economic Development
(828) 894-2895
Planning
(828) 894-2732
35 Walker St Columbus NC

WHEN IS A RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT REQUIRED?

BEFORE YOU START YOUR PROJECT

North Carolina law generally allows certain construction, repair, replacement, or alteration work costing **$40,000 or less** to be performed without a building permit **when the work meets the applicable North Carolina State Building Code requirements and does not involve work specifically excluded from the exemption.**

A permit is required regardless of cost when the work involves:

- Addition, repair, or replacement of **load-bearing structures**
- Addition or change in the design of **plumbing**
- Addition, replacement, or change in the design of **heating or air-conditioning**
- Addition, replacement, or change in **electrical wiring, appliances, or equipment**
- Use of materials not permitted by the North Carolina State Building Code
- **Addition of roofing** (replacement is treated differently under the statutory exemption)

COMMON PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE A PERMIT

- New construction, room additions, and finished living areas
- **Deck additions or structural deck work**
- Garages, carports, porches, and similar accessory structures
- Structural repairs involving **floor joists, subflooring, roof framing/sheathing, headers, piers, footings, or other load-bearing components**
- Adding or relocating plumbing fixtures or changing plumbing system design
- Adding or modifying HVAC systems
- Adding or relocating electrical wiring or equipment
- Roofing additions
- Projects costing **more than $40,000**

WORK THAT MAY NOT REQUIRE A BUILDING PERMIT

When the work is **$40,000 or less** and meets all applicable code requirements, the following may be exempt:

- **Non-structural repairs**
- Replacement of **windows, doors, or exterior siding** when the statutory requirements are met

- Repair or replacement of **decking, pickets, railings, and stair treads** when the statutory requirements are met
- Replacement of plumbing fixtures or components **without changing size or capacity**
- **Like-kind replacement of electrical devices or lighting fixtures** without adding or relocating wiring
- Certain **water heater replacements** when the statutory requirements are met
- Certain roof **replacement/repair** work when it qualifies under the applicable exemption

IMPORTANT: The $40,000 threshold does **not** automatically make every project permit-exempt. The type and scope of work must also qualify for the statutory exemption.

LICENSED CONTRACTORS

General Contractor:
North Carolina generally requires a licensed general contractor for projects where the cost of the undertaking is **$40,000 or more**, subject to statutory exemptions.

Electrical Contractor:
Electrical work requiring a permit must be performed by a properly licensed electrical contractor unless a statutory homeowner exemption applies.

Plumbing / Heating & Air Conditioning:
Work requiring a permit must be performed by the appropriately licensed specialty contractor unless a statutory homeowner exemption applies.

HOMEOWNER EXEMPTION:
A homeowner may perform certain work on property they own when the statutory requirements for homeowner-performed work are met, including the applicable owner-occupancy requirements.

PROPERTY OWNER RESPONSIBILITY

Property owners are responsible for reporting improvements to the **County Tax Assessor**. A tax-record update is separate from the building permit and inspection process.

WHEN IN DOUBT, CONTACT THE BUILDING DEPARTMENT BEFORE STARTING WORK.

Permit requirements are based on North Carolina General Statutes and the North Carolina State Building Code. Additional zoning, environmental, septic, floodplain, or other approvals may apply. This information is provided as a general guide and does not replace applicable statutes, codes, or official determinations.