



Unpermitted Existing Buildings

Bulletin 42

Division of Building, Safety, and Inspection for 2015 International Codes

This bulletin establishes an outline for handling the permit process for buildings built without a building permit.

Permit Application Process:

1. County will accept an application for building permit based on **current fees**, including plan review fee, permit fee and whole house plumbing/mechanical.
2. An investigation fee will not be collected **IF** the current owner is not the person who built the structure without a permit and who, at the time of purchase, had no knowledge that the real property contained unpermitted development. The burden of proof of innocence is on the property owner. Evidence that can be used to demonstrate innocence includes, but is not limited to, aerial photography, property tax records, real estate deeds, and real property transfer disclosure statements. Some form of documentation must be provided to confirm purchase date. County Assessor's records may provide date the structure was first assessed.
3. Plans to be submitted include site plan, as-built plans and a report from a structural engineer on the structural integrity of the structure.
4. Floor plans will be required on all commercial and multifamily structures.
5. The County will review the plans and structural report and perform a final inspection.
6. Upgrades to current code is not required if the original components met code requirements at time of construction.

Exception:

1. Components of single family detached structures that have or are to be remodeled or changed by the owner.
2. Commercial and multifamily structures shall comply with current codes unless specific alternate methods and materials have been approved as part of the plan review.
7. All other departments/divisions regulations are to be reviewed to current regulations including fire flow, wetlands, erosion control, etc. with the new application.
8. Impact fees, Wetland issues, Shoreline requirements and erosion control issues may apply.

Inspection Process:

1. Prior to commencing any additional work, a status inspection must be performed by Pierce County.
2. Any construction that has not been concealed or covered shall be left open until the status inspection is approved to cover.
3. If construction is complete and the engineer has addressed all components, this inspection may be combined with the final life/safety inspection. **Engineer must address footing sizes and steel placement, stud spacing, header sizes, all connections from foundation to sill plate, roof system to top plate, insulation "R" value, and window "U" value.**
4. The applicant must review the inspection report detail to identify any HOLDS or conditions of approval that need to be taken care of.
5. Prior to the Building Division approval of any construction:
 - i. The electrical permit must be issued and approved.
 - ii. Any plumbing or mechanical installations must have a permit and be inspected.
 - iii. Pierce County will need to verify any repairs, identified by the engineer, have been completed.