

Building Safety and Sustainability Frequently Asked Questions

What is a permit and why do I need one?

Permits enable Pima County to monitor and regulate construction to ensure public safety. Guaranteeing the safety of the occupants of a building is the primary purpose of adopting building codes. Pima County has adopted the 2006 International Residential Code, which includes structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical for residential projects. In addition, Pima County has also adopted the 2006 International Building Code, 2006 International Plumbing Code, 2006 International Mechanical Code, 2006 International Energy Conservation Code, 2006 International Property Maintenance Code, 2005 National Electric Code, 2006 International Wild land-Urban Interface Code, 2006 Outdoor Lighting Code, 2006 Sustainable Energy Standard, 2006 International Fuel Gas Code without amendments, Pima County's Inclusive Home Design Ordinance and Pima County's Zoning Code (Title 18).

Where can I find a copy of the building codes?

All the International Building Codes are available at the local libraries or they can be purchased online from the International Code Council at www.iccsafe.org . Pima County's Inclusive Home Design Ordinance summary and the Zoning Code (Title 18) can be found at www.pimaxpress.com/building in Codes and Local Amendments section.

Are there local amendments to the building codes?

Yes, and they can be found at www.pimaxpress.com/building in the Codes and Local Amendments Section

Who can apply for a building permit?

Property owners, Architects, and licensed contractors can apply for and obtain a permit. If you do not fall into one of these categories you need to provide a Letter of Authorization from the property owner prior to applying for the permit.

Where do I apply for a building permit?

Residents who live in unincorporated Pima County apply for building permits at 201 N. Stone Ave. Building Safety and Sustainability is located on the first floor of the Public Works Building at the intersection of Stone Ave and Alameda St (Northwest corner).

Residents who live in Tucson's city limits, Oro Valley, Marana, South Tucson, or Sahuarita will need to obtain a building permit from the jurisdiction that they live in.

If you are connecting to a sewer line, you need to pay your sewer connection fees at Pima County Development Services before the other jurisdiction will issue your permit.

If you are installing a septic system, Pima County will issue the septic permit for Oro Valley, Marana, and Sahuarita. For Tucson and South Tucson, Building Safety and Sustainability will approve the proposed design of the system, but the actual permit will be issued by the jurisdiction.

How do I obtain a building permit?

To obtain a permit, construction plans, including a site plan, must be prepared and submitted to Pima County Building Safety and Sustainability. At a minimum, these plans must indicate the location of the proposed improvements and the type of construction. Additional information may be required based on the specific project. To determine the type of information required review Building Safety and Sustainability's submittal checklists at www.pimaxpress.com/building.

Upon submittal, the plans are reviewed for compliance with all applicable code requirements. Once approved, construction must be performed in accordance with the approved plans. Any changes to an approved plan will require a revision application and a plan review approval by Building Safety and Sustainability.

What items are reviewed during the plan review?

The permit application will be reviewed to ensure it is in compliance with all zoning, NPPO, grading, HDZ, structural, architectural, life safety, mechanical, and electrical requirements.

How long with the plan review take?

Time frames for building permit reviews and issuances may vary depending on the project being permitted. Some projects can be fully permitted over-the-counter.

Generally, all plan reviews that are dropped off are completed within five working days. Plan reviews for large commercial project greater than 20,000 sq ft will be completed within ten working days.

When a plan requires corrections it will be returned to the applicant for corrections; when the applicant returns corrected plan the re-review will be completed within five working days.

The plan review time may vary depending on the complexity of the plans, the total number of plans under review and the availability of the appropriate plans examiner.

When will a permit be issued?

The applicant will receive an e-mail or phone call indicating the permit is ready to be issued. This will occur after all the applicable building reviews have been completed and approved. Once the permitting fees have been paid the permit will be issued to the applicant.

How much does a permit cost?

All permit fees are based on the current fees schedule as adopted by Pima County. Individual project fees will vary depending on the type and size of the project and the scope of work. The fee schedule can be found at www.pimaxpress.com

What if I do not get a building permit?

If a required building permit is not obtained prior to the start of construction, the property owner may be subject to fines, penalties, and/or legal action. The property owner must immediately obtain permits for the work and pass all required inspections. If permits are not acquired, the structure or site must be returned to its original condition.

When is a building permit not required?

A building permit is not required for work such as wallpapering, painting, tiling, carpeting, countertops or similar finish work, and fences and block walls four feet (4') tall or less. Likewise, certain plumbing, mechanical and electrical work, including the replacement or repair of fixtures does not require a permit.

A complete listing of project permitting requirements can be found at <http://www.pimaxpress.com/Documents/Building/Do%20You%20Need%20a%20Permit.pdf>

What about inspections?

Whether a homeowner or a contractor performs work, the inspection phase is a method to verify that the installation is correct. It is the permit holders' responsibility to call for inspections at specific times during the construction phase. A contractor may request inspections, but it is the permit holders' responsibility to ensure that all required inspections are made. The type of inspections required will vary depending on the project. Remember, a project is not complete until it has passed the final inspection.

What if I have a permit, but do not call for inspections?

A project is not complete until it passes the final inspection. Permits expire after one year if a required inspection has not been performed. If a permit expires before the final inspection, all work must be ceased. In order to continue work after the expiration of a permit the permit must be reactivated or another permit obtained. If a permit has expired, please review Building Safety and Sustainability's Standard Operating Procedures 101.2 "Reinstatement of expired permits" at www.pimaxpress.com/building and contact Building Safety and Sustainability at (520) 740-6490 for assistance.

How do I schedule an inspection?

Building inspections are scheduled using the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Call 740-6970 and follow the phone prompts. Additional information is available at www.pimaxpress.com/Building/IVR.htm.