Overview
The permitting process is divided into two main parts – plan review and inspections. The first part includes applying for the permit, plan review and approval, and purchasing the permit. The second part includes the construction and inspections. A permit is not complete until it receives final inspection approval.

Highlights in this handout:
- Why get a permit?
- Where do I get a permit?
- Who can do the work?
- How much will a permit cost?
- How long is a permit valid?
- What if the work has already been done without a permit?
- Types of permits
  - Building Permits
  - Zoning Permits
  - Trade Permits: Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing
  - Combination Permits
- How do I request inspections, and what types of inspections do I need?
- Green Building Practices
- Resource information and additional handouts

Why get a permit?
Permits protect you and your family, home, and financial investment.
- Inspections ensure that work is done safely and meets the minimum code requirements. Incorrect installations can result in house fires, flood damage and/or structural problems.
- Minor problems that could lead to costly repairs, liability and life safety issues can also be detected during inspections and brought to your attention before the situation worsens.
- When selling a property, the buyer, realtor or lender may require that unpermitted work be properly permitted, corrected and inspected before closing. This leaves you in the position of scrambling to get unpermitted work permitted.

It’s the law. State Building Code requires that permits be obtained for certain types of work.

Where do I get a permit?
Permits can be submitted in the Development Services Center (DSC) located at 1900 SW 4th Avenue, First Floor, Suite 1500. Please visit our Web site at www.portlandoregon.gov/bds to check the current business hours for the DSC. Customers are welcome to come in to the DSC with preliminary drawings and questions before applying for permits.

Who can do the work?
If you are a homeowner working on your residence, you may act as your own general contractor. This means that you may perform the construction work yourself and/or hire licensed subcontractors to work with you. Homeowners are required to obtain the same permits as if a contractor were doing the work.

If you intend to act as your own contractor, you will be required to sign a form acknowledging your responsibilities as an owner/contractor prior to the issuance of your permit.

A homeowner may not do electrical work on a dwelling that is now or will be for sale, lease, rent or exchange within six months of final approval. If you do not own and live in the dwelling, a State of Oregon licensed electrical contractor must do the work. If you have questions concerning your eligibility to work on a building, please call Residential Inspections at 503-823-7388 for more information.
How much will a permit cost?

Building permit and zoning permit fees are based on the fair market value of the project. The fair market value is the amount that a licensed contractor would charge for the complete project, even if you intend to do some or all of the work yourself. Trade permit fees are charged on an item-by-item basis.

For applications that cannot be issued while you wait, a portion of the fees are paid when the plans are taken in. All other fees are paid when the permit is picked up.

For a permit fee estimate, please use our online Fee Estimator at www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/ofe.

When can work start?

Work may start when your permit has been issued. You will have paid all your permit fees, you will have a set of approved drawings along with an inspection card available on the job site where the inspector can easily see them.

How long is a permit valid?

A permit application will expire in 180 days if there is no activity on the application. You may request an extension. For information on obtaining an extension, call Permitting Services at 503-823-7357.

An issued permit will expire if 180 days pass without an approved inspection. You may request an extension. For information on obtaining an extension, call Residential Inspections at 503-823-7388.

What if the work has already been done without a permit?

Permits can be issued and inspections can be performed for existing work that was done without a permit. The process is the same as is required for new work, except that covered work will need to be exposed to verify that it was installed to code and according to the approved plans. The inspector will work with you to determine the extent of covered work that may need to be exposed.

Building Permits

A building permit is usually required to build a new structure, or to alter or enlarge an existing structure, although certain projects do not require a building permit. Please refer to Brochure #2, Do I Need a Permit for My Project? available online.

How can I get a Building Permit?

Permit applications and plans must be submitted in person in the Development Services Center. Depending on the complexity of your project, we may be able to issue your permit while you wait. For complicated additions or alterations, the plans will usually have to be submitted for a more extensive review.

If you are proposing to build a single family home, accessory dwelling unit (ADU), duplex or townhouse, please see Brochure #5, Applying for a New Single Family Residential Project and Sample Fees.

When you are ready to apply for a building permit, please bring the following:

- A completed Building Permit Application, available online or in the Development Services Center.
- Four sets of drawn-to-scale plans showing all of the work on the building and the property. Detailed Submittal Guidelines for a variety of project types are available on our Web site. For additional information on drawing standards, please see Brochure #6, What Plans Do I Need for a Building Permit? Note that all projects are unique and may need more or less detailed drawings depending on the complexity of your project.
- A description of all mechanical, electrical and plumbing work you will be doing.
Who will review your project?

Your permit application will be checked by staff representing several different review groups, depending on the scope of work and specific site conditions. These review groups may include:

Planning and Zoning Review

Most permit applications are reviewed by Planning and Zoning staff, who review plans for compliance with Portland Zoning Code (Title 33) and Tree Code (Title 11). These Titles have requirements such as environmental and design standards, window and garage requirements, tree removal, planting and preservation, building coverage, building height, and setbacks.

Planning and Zoning staff administer the Portland Zoning Code and Tree Code for sites within the City limits and for sites within the Urban Services boundary of Multnomah County.

If your project is in unincorporated Multnomah County beyond the Urban Services boundary, it must be approved by Multnomah County Planning staff. Please refer to the last page of this guide for contact information.

Building Plan Review

Plans examiners will check the plans for structural, fire and life safety requirements of the Oregon Residential Specialty Code.

Additional Reviews

Depending on site conditions and work proposed, plans may also be checked by reviewers from Site Development, the Bureaus of Environmental Services, Fire, Parks, Transportation, and Water to make sure that the project meets all applicable codes.

What happens with Building Permit applications that are taken in for review?

For permit applications that we cannot issue while you wait and have been taken in for review, progress can be tracked online by using the permit/case search feature on our website. (See Tracking Your Building Permit Application for more information), or by calling either 503-823-7000 for an automated faxed report or Permitting Services at 503-823-7357.

If additional information or changes are needed for your proposal to comply with applicable codes, a reviewer will send you a checksheet identifying the issues that must be addressed on your plans. You may receive checksheets from more than one review group, and you must respond to each checksheet before your permit will be issued. See How to Update your Plans and Respond to a Checksheet for more information.

Our goal is to complete our reviews by either approving or sending a checksheet within seven working days for alterations and 15 working days for additions and new structures. Once the necessary reviews have been approved, the permit will be issued, usually within two working days. A permit technician will contact you to let you know when your permit is ready to be picked up.

Zoning Permits

Zoning permits verify compliance with Zoning Code and Title 11 Tree Code standards and may be required for projects that don’t require a building permit. See “Brochure #2 - Do I need a permit for my project” for more information.

Before starting your project, check with Planning and Zoning staff by calling 503-823-7526 or visit the Development Services Center to determine what regulations will apply, if a land use review is required, and what plans you will need to submit with your application.

Plan Submittal

Four sets of drawn to scale plans are required for a zoning permit. A site plan, grading plan, landscape and tree plan, floor plans, and exterior elevations may be required based on the scope of work proposed.
Trade Permits: Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, and Combination

Trade permits are issued at the trade permits counter in the Development Services Center, usually while you wait. Trade permits may also be purchased online. Trade permits that involve plan review cannot be purchased online.

Trade Permit applications are available online and in the Development Services Center. The work description on the application needs to include the location and the scope of work being performed. If a contractor is doing work under a trade permit, the contractor portion of the application needs to be filled out and signed by the contractor/representative. All necessary license information needs to be included on the application. If a homeowner is doing the work, the property owner portion of the application needs to be filled out and signed by the homeowner.

Drawn plans are usually not necessary; however, there are instances where plans may be required.

Permits for work in the right of way or Sanitation permits are not available online.

If you have questions about whether a Trade Permit is needed for your project, please see Brochure #2, Do I Need a Permit for My Project?

Combination Permits

If your project includes a trade permit and a building permit, trade permits may be combined with the building permit. You will need to submit mechanical, electrical, and plumbing applications signed either by you, if you are doing these portions of the work yourself, or by your licensed subcontractors. Without these signed applications on file, you will have to apply for trade permits separately from the building permit.

Mechanical Permits

Mechanical permits are required for work on heating, cooling and ventilation systems. Installing a natural gas line, vent, fuel oil tank or chimney liner for appliances or other equipment is also considered mechanical work.

Plan submittal: Plans are not usually necessary unless the mechanical work involves the following:
- Outdoor mechanical equipment: a site plan showing the location of outdoor mechanical equipment such as air conditioners, heat pumps, and fuel oil tanks. Call Planning and Zoning at 503-823-7526 to confirm setback and other zoning requirements.
- Four or more new gas outlets: a to-scale drawing showing pipe layout and sizes.
- Fuel oil tanks: a to-scale drawing of the unit.

Electrical permits

Electrical permits are required for work on the electrical system. Before installing a new meter, call your local utility to make sure the location is acceptable.

Plan submittal: Plans are not usually necessary to get a permit for electrical work. However, Plan Review is required when work includes one of the following:
- A service or feeder rated at 600 amps or over; or
- Service or feeder 400 amps or more when the available fault current exceeds 10,000 amps at 150 volts or less to ground; or
- Renewable Energy. Renewable electric energy systems rated over 25 KVA; or
- Six or more residential units in one structure; or
- Floating buildings as defined in Article 553 of OAR.

Plumbing Permits

Plumbing permits are required for work on the plumbing system of your single-family home or duplex. Please refer to Brochure #2, Do I Need a Permit for My Project?

Plan submittal: Plans are usually not necessary to get a permit for plumbing work.
Inspections

Inspections are required to verify that work is being done according to code requirements and the stamped approved plans. There are several categories of inspections, including Erosion Control, Building, Manufactured Homes, Zoning, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing.

Tree Preservation Inspection

If your permit requires tree preservation, you must call for a tree preservation inspection prior to any ground disturbing activities. A tree inspector will check for compliance with tree protection requirements. This inspection must be approved before other inspections can be scheduled.

Erosion Control Inspections

If your project involves ground disturbing activity, erosion control measures must be installed and in place prior to beginning any ground disturbing activities and prior to your first building inspection. Pre Erosion Control inspections will be inspected with footing/foundation. When ground disturbing activities are complete, exposed soils must be stabilized, permanent erosion control measures installed and the permanent erosion control measures inspection must be approved. If your project requires landscaping, the landscaping must be installed in order to obtain final inspection approval. Approved Erosion Control Methods can be found at the BDS website www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/article/94539. Call Residential Inspections at 503-823-7388 with any questions.

Building Inspections

Building Inspections are performed for foundations, walls, floors, ceilings, stairs, roofs, etc. Whether you are just remodeling a small room or building a new home, these elements need to be inspected before they are covered, or prior to pouring any concrete. When the project is completed and all of the trade permit inspections have been approved, a final building inspection is required to close your permit.

Zoning Inspections

For zoning permits, a code compliance inspection is the only inspection required. For building permits,

Zoning Inspections may be required to verify compliance with zoning requirements, in addition to building and trades inspections.

Mechanical Inspections

Mechanical permits are required for work on heating, ventilation or air conditioning systems (also called HVAC), or installing a natural gas line, vent, fuel oil tank or chimney liner. All of these must be inspected prior to covering them up or putting them into service.

Electrical Inspections

Electrical permits require three general inspections: cover, service and final.

- Call for cover inspection when all of the new circuits are wired (boxes installed, wires run, grounding conductor connected or made up, nail plates installed in areas as needed, etc.) Do not cover your work with insulation, receptacles or wall switches until the cover inspection is approved.

- Call for a service inspection when the service electrical mast, meter base, service panels, grounding electrode systems, and (if possible) branch circuits have been installed.

- Call for final inspection when the electrical work has been completed and panel boxes are covered, the circuits are labeled in the right spaces on the box and all cover plates are installed. All of the equipment and appliances must be installed, grounded and energized by the time the final inspection occurs.

Plumbing Inspections

All piping (water, sewer, stormwater, waste and vent systems) must be tested and exposed for inspection prior to burial or covering with floor, wall or ceiling coverings. A final plumbing inspection must also be approved after all of the plumbing fixtures are installed and operating.
How do I request an Inspection?

Inspections are tracked and scheduled through our computerized telephone system called IVR (Interactive Voice Response). An IVR number is assigned to your permit application, and is printed in the upper right-hand corner of your permit inspection card. If you are unsure of your IVR number, you may use your permit number to schedule inspections.

Each of the inspections has a unique three-digit code. Codes are listed on the inside of your permit card or ask for an IVR Inspection Request Pocket Reference Book when you pick up your permit.

You will not be able to request an inspection if:

- Your permit has not been issued
- Your permit has unpaid fees (no inspections can be requested until all fees are paid)
- Your permit is for sewer and sanitation work in the public right-of-way (the area between the property line and the street.) For inspections in the right-of-way, call 503-823-7002.

To access the IVR system, call 503-823-7000 and follow the menu prompts

The IVR system is available 24 hours a day (except for system maintenance on Saturday mornings). If IVR cannot complete your requested transaction, you may be forwarded to a staff person during business hours.

Be prepared with the following:

- An IVR number or permit number
- The three-digit inspection code(s) you would like to schedule
- Pen and paper to write down your confirmation number

Rescheduling or canceling an inspection:

To reschedule or cancel a same-day inspection, you must call in your request no later than 6:00 am on the day of the scheduled inspection. If you call between 6:00 am and 8:00 am, you’ll be asked to call back after 8:00 am to speak to a staff member.

Based on the valuation of the permitted work, permits have a limited amount of inspections allowed. If additional inspections are still needed to complete your project you can purchase them directly through the City IVR system, the same system used to request inspections. If your project exceeds the “Included/allowable Inspections”, you will be required to pay an inspection fee for each additional inspection. Follow the IVR Prompts to purchase and pay for your additional inspections. The IVR system will offer you the option to purchase additional inspections and tell you the cost.

IVR Prompts

Dial 503-823-7000 and respond to the IVR prompts as follows:

Select #1 (Schedule an inspection)

Enter your IVR number followed by the # key. (If you don’t know your IVR number, follow the prompts to enter your permit number.)

Enter your three-digit inspection code. The system will not allow you to schedule an inspection not associated with your permit type, so make sure you have selected the correct three-digit code.

Select one of the next five business days for your inspection. (To schedule an inspection for the same day, you must request the inspection prior to 6:00 am.)

Select 1-for any time of day, 2-for morning and 3-for afternoon inspection.

Enter your telephone number followed by the # key.

If you need to leave the inspector a message press 1, if not press 2. If you record a message for an inspector, be sure to press the # key when you are finished recording, and then press the 1 key to send the message. If you fail to do this, the inspector will not receive your message.

To hear your confirmation number and hang up, press 1; to schedule another inspection on the same permit, press 2; to schedule an inspection on a different permit, press 3.

Refer to Inspection Request IVR Reference available online and in the DSC.
What if I make changes/revisions after my permit is issued?

Changes to the construction on the site may require plan review. If so, your inspector will ask you to bring three sets of new updated plans that show the changes, and a copy of the stamped approved plans to apply for a revision in the Development Services Center. Call Permitting Services at 503-823-7357 for more information about revisions and revision applications.

What is a Deferred Submittal?

A deferred submittal can be requested for pre-manufactured roof trusses or floor joists when complete details and calculations are not ready to be submitted for plan review at the time of building permit application or prior to permit issuance. The permit drawings must identify all deferred submittal items.

The deferred submittal must be submitted, reviewed, approved and issued after the building permit is issued, and is processed in the same manner as a building permit. There is a nominal fee. Call Permitting Services at 503-823-7357 for more information about deferred submittals.

Requesting inspections on a Revision or Deferred Submittal:

Inspection requests and results on revisions and deferred submittals are recorded on the main building permit for the project. If you encounter any difficulties when trying to schedule an inspection on a permit that has revisions or deferred submittals, please press 0 for assistance.

Green Building Practices

Incorporating green practices into your project can help you save energy, protect resources, and create a healthier home environment.

For information about green building strategies, materials and financial incentives, visit: www.buildgreen411.com
Resources

Important Web Sites
Bureau of Development Services (BDS)  
www.portlandoregon.gov/bds
Portlandmaps  www.portlandmaps.com
Zoning Code (Title 33)  
www.portlandoregon.gov/zoningcode
Building Codes  www2.iccsafe.org/states/oregon
Green Building  www.buildgreen411.com
Multnomah County Land Use Planning (503-988-3043)  
www.multco.us/land-use-planning
Tree Information & Regulations  
www.portlandoregon.gov/trees

BDS Residential Handouts (available online)
www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

Brochure #1
Guide to Residential Permits and Inspections

Brochure #2
Do I Need a Permit for My Project?

Brochure #3
Fences, Decks and Outdoor Projects

Brochure #4
Wood Stoves, Fireplace Inserts and Chimneys

Brochure #5
Applying for a New Single Family Residential Project and Sample Fees

Brochure #6
What Plans Do I Need for a Building Permit?

Brochure #7
Broken Sewer and Drain Lines

Brochure #8
Stairs

Brochure #9
Converting Attics, Basements and Garages to Living Space

Brochure #10
Windows

Brochure #11
Residential Structures and Landscaping in Wildfire Hazard Areas

Brochure #12
Residential Seismic Strengthening

Accessory Dwelling Units - Program Guide

Helpful Information

Bureau of Development Services
City of Portland, Oregon
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Portland, OR 97201
www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

General Office Hours:
Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
BDS main number: 503-823-7300

Permit Information is available at the following location:
Development Services Center (First Floor)
For Hours Call 503-823-7310
or visit www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

Permitting Services (Second Floor)
For Hours Call 503-823-7310
or visit www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

Important Telephone Numbers
DSC automated information line ..............503-823-7310
Building code information ....................503-823-1456
Parking, sidewalk, lane and street closure permits ....................503-823-7365
Driveway curb cuts.............................503-823-7002
Planning and Zoning information............503-823-7526
Permit information for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sewer and signs.....503-823-7363
Permitting process and fee information......503-823-7357
Resources and records ......................503-823-7660
BDS 24-hour inspection request line (requires IVR number and three-digit inspection code) ..............503-823-7000
Residential information for one and two family dwellings ..........503-823-7388
City of Portland TTY .........................503-823-6868
Multnomah County Taxation & Assessment ..................503-988-3326
Multnomah County Planning Department ...503-988-3043
Tree Hotline ................................503-823-8733

For more detailed information regarding the bureau’s hours of operation and available services:

Visit our Web site
www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

Note: All information in this brochure is subject to change.