



Basic Housing Requirements



Top 25 Basic Requirements For Residential Dwelling Units

Portland's Property Maintenance code (Title 29) sets the basic requirements for all living units within the city. Protection of the health, safety and welfare of citizens, the preservation of housing, the prevention of exterior deterioration of non-residential structures and neighborhood livability are the main goals of Title 29.

Most requirements are common sense, but others may not be obvious. Listed below are 25 areas around the home or apartment where violations of the housing maintenance code are most often found.

To report violations of these requirements, call the City of Portland Neighborhood Inspections/Compliance Services Office at 503-823-2633 or online at www.portlandoregon.gov/bds.

CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON - BUREAU OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97201 • 503-823-7300 • www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

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1. Smoke and/or Carbon Monoxide Detectors/Alarms

- Smoke detectors must work and be located in sleeping rooms, in the immediate vicinity of the sleeping rooms and on each level of the house, including basements and attics with habitable space.
- Carbon Monoxide Detectors must work and be located within each bedroom/sleeping area or within 15' outside of each bedroom/sleeping area in dwelling units and any enclosed common area containing a carbon monoxide source or connected to a common area containing a carbon monoxide source.

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2. Emergency exits

- Each residential dwelling unit must have at least one approved emergency exit.
- Every bedroom must have a window or door that opens directly to the outside.
- Windows and doors should never be obstructed.

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3. Doors and windows

- Broken, missing or poorly fitted doors and windows must be repaired to prevent weather entry.
- Window and door locks, strike plates and jambs must work properly and be in good repair.
- Bedroom windows must open and be able to stay open for ventilation or emergency exit.

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4. Walls and ceilings

- Plaster, wallboard and paneling must not be damaged or missing.
- Paint and wallpaper should not be peeling away from the wall.

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5. Floors

- All carpets, tiles, and floor linoleum and vinyl (particularly in bathrooms and kitchens) must be maintained so as not to be worn, cracked, missing or damaged.

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6. Stairs

- Steps must be kept in good repair, with no broken or damaged treads.
- Stairs and landings must have intact handrails and/or guardrails.

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7. Electrical

- The electrical service to a dwelling must be adequate to prevent tripping circuit breakers or the excessive use of extension cords.
- Wiring must be located inside walls, boxes or metal conduit.
- Electric fixtures must be securely fastened in place.
- Most electrical work requires a permit.

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8. Plumbing

- Water pipes, drain pipes and fixtures must be properly installed and kept leak free.
- Most plumbing work requires a permit.

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9. Heating systems

- Furnaces or wall heaters must be in working order and capable of heating all living/habitable spaces to at least 68 degrees. Portable heaters cannot be used to meet this requirement.

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10. Wood stoves

- Wood stoves must be installed to maintain a certain distance from combustible walls, ceilings, floors and household items.
- A permit is required to install all wood stoves.

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11. Equipment and appliances

- Fans, thermostats and major appliances should function properly.
- Hot water heaters must be equipped with a pressure relief valve and pressure relief drain tube.
- All hot water heater replacements require permits and earthquake bracing.

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12. Basic utilities

- All residential dwelling units shall have working water, electric and/or gas and sanitary services.

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13. Conversion of basements, attics, garages and accessory structures

- A building permit is required before changing a basement, attic, garage or accessory structure to a separate dwelling unit or habitable space.

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14. Basements and crawl spaces

- Cracked or settled basement walls must be repaired or replaced.
- The cause of any standing water must be eliminated.
- Insect or rodent infestations must be prevented or eliminated.

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15. Foundations

- Settling, cracked, crumbling or excessively leaning foundation walls must be repaired or replaced.

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16. Porches and steps

- Broken and deteriorated porch deck boards, steps and handrails, as well as broken outdoor concrete steps, must be repaired.

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17. Siding

- Siding must be maintained free of damage, missing, loose or rotten boards, peeling paint and bare wood.

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18. Roofs

- Loose, missing or excessively worn shingles must be replaced to prevent leaks.
- Sagging and/or damaged rafters must be repaired.

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19. Gutters and downspouts

- Gutters and downspouts should drain and be properly connected in order to channel water away from the foundation to an approved point of disposal.

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20. Chimneys

- Chimneys should be structurally sound with no cracks, deteriorated mortar, missing or broken brick.
- Chimneys must be maintained to prevent chimney fires and the back-up of noxious gases.

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21. Fences

- Damaged or broken fences that pose a danger to people or a neighbor's property must be repaired, replaced or removed.

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22. Walks and driveways

- Excessive cracks and damage in all walkways must be repaired to prevent pedestrian injury.

23. Garbage collection

- Owners of rental residential property must subscribe to and pay for weekly recycling and composting service and every other week garbage service for each rental unit.

24. Sanitation

- Dwelling units must be kept reasonably free of dampness to prevent conditions of decay and mold growth.
- All living units, both inside and out, must be free of garbage or trash.
- Have adequate garbage capacity and service, a minimum of one 20 gallon receptacle per dwelling unit.
- Dwelling units must be kept free of insect and rodent infestation; and if found properly exterminated.

25. Accessory buildings

- Garages, carports and sheds must be structurally sound and well maintained and not occupied for habitable (living) purposes.

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Who can do the work

For work that requires a permit, the owner of a single family home or duplex may hire a licensed contractor to do the work, or in some cases, do the work themselves. If the owner performs the work, then the owner will be responsible for doing the work, not a friend, neighbor, tenant or relative, unless they hold an appropriate contractor's license. The permit requirements for an owner doing their own work are the same as those for a contractor doing the work.

NOTE: If electrical work is required in a vacant and/or rental property or if the property is for sale or will be for sale, then a licensed electrical contractor is required to pull the electrical permit and perform the work. If the site is an owner-occupied property, then the owner and immediate family can obtain the permit and perform the work.

If plumbing work is required in a rental property that has 3 or more units, then a licensed plumbing contractor is required. If the site has 1 or 2 dwelling units, then the owner can do their own work.

Resources

BDS publishes other handouts that provide helpful information about other residential projects, such as:

- Do I Need a Permit for My Project?
- Converting Attics, Basements and Garages to Living Space
- Fences, Decks and Outdoor Projects
- Stairs
- Windows
- Wood Stoves, Fireplace Inserts and Chimneys
- What Plans Do I Need for a Building Permit?

These handouts and others as well as permit applications and code guides are available both in the Development Services Center and on the BDS Web site.

Scheduling a permit inspection

- Call 503-823-7000, the BDS 24 hour inspection request line
- There must be an adult age 18 or older to allow the inspector entry

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

BDS main number	503-823-7300
Neighborhood Inspections/Compliance Services	503-823-2633
DSC automated information line	503-823-7310
Building code information	503-823-1456
Zoning code information	503-823-7526
Permit information for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sewer and sign	503-823-7363
Permitting process and fees	503-823-7357
Permit resources and records	503-823-7660
BDS 24 hour inspection request line requires IVR number and three digit type of inspection code	503-823-7000
Residential information for one and two family dwellings.....	503-823-7388
City of Portland TTY	503-823-6868

For more detailed information regarding the bureau's hours of operation and available services;

Visit our Website
www.portlandoregon.gov/bds

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