

A building permit is generally required for any construction, alteration, repair, or demolition that impacts a building's structural integrity, life safety, or fire resistance. This requirement is established by the California Building Standards Codes, codified in Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations. In California, many non-structural interior projects to single-family and two-family homes are exempt from requiring a building permit. Finish work such as painting, wallpapering, and installing new floor coverings like carpet, tile, or laminate do not require approval. Replacing kitchen or bathroom cabinets and countertops is also exempt, provided the work does not change the existing layout or alter plumbing or electrical wiring.

This bulletin contains information about some types of building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing work on residential projects that do not require a building permit. Work exempt from a permit must still comply with applicable Building Codes, State of California Codes, city policies and standards, and all other applicable ordinances.

NOTE: Exemptions from permit requirements shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of this code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.

Building:

1. Other than storm shelters, one-story detached accessory buildings or structures, provided that the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet and the building or structure is entirely above grade and is not located on a maintenance easement, on a public utilities easement, or within a setback area as required by any local ordinance or other applicable law. The building or structure shall not exceed the height requirements set forth in any local ordinance or other applicable law. It is permissible that these buildings or structures still be regulated by Part 7 California Wildland Urban-Interface Code, despite exemption from permit.
2. Fences not over six feet high.
3. Retaining walls that are not over four feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding Class I, II, or IIIA liquids.
4. Water tanks supported directly on grade if the capacity is not greater than 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width is not greater than 2:1.
5. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an accessible route.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
7. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
8. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one-and two-family dwellings.
9. Window awnings, supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
10. Decks not exceeding 200 square feet in area, that are not more than 30 inches above grade at any point, are not attached to a dwelling and do not serve the exit door required by Section R311.4.

11. Skateboard ramps. The building or structure shall not exceed the height requirements set forth in any local ordinance or other applicable law.

Electrical:

1. Listed cord-and-plug connected temporary decorative lighting.
2. Reinstallation of attachment plug receptacles but not the outlets therefor.
3. Replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location.
4. Electrical wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus or equipment operating at less than 25 volts and not capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.
5. Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.

Gas:

1. Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliance.
2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
3. Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

Plumbing:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drain pipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.
2. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures.

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliances, ventilation equipment, cooling units, and evaporative cooler.
2. Replacement of any parts that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe.
3. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment.
4. Self-contained refrigeration system containing 10 lbs. or less of refrigerant.
5. Portable fuel cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system.

If you are unsure about the specific permit exemptions for your project, it is recommended that you contact the Building Division at 442-339-2719 or by email at building@carlsbadca.gov or visit the [Building Division webpage](#) for more information.