



**South Central Regional
Construction Code Council**

5058 W. Main Street, Houma, Louisiana 70360
P.O. Box 1870, Gray, Louisiana 70359
Toll Free at 1-866-95-PERMIT or (985) 655-1070

www.MyPermitNow.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Permit Questions

1. Why do I need a permit?

State laws and local ordinances require you to have a permit for any construction project. These laws are designed to protect public safety and welfare by ensuring a project does not endanger you or the public.

2. What happens if I go ahead and build without a permit?

There is a strong possibility that utility companies will refuse to provide electric or gas service to your structure. Also, we will not issue a Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Compliance for your structure. Both of these documents are important when acquiring proper insurance coverage.

3. I've worked on construction projects for a long time. I'm not an amateur and there has never been a problem with my work. Why do I still have to get a permit?

A permit provides proof to a buyer, insurance company, or anyone that your structure is building code compliant by way of an independent inspection process. If someone does not know your reputation or simply does not want to take your word for it, you have a way to prove you have followed all building codes in your construction projects. In addition to this, it is required by law.

4. With all the construction going on in my jurisdiction, how would I get caught if I don't get a permit?

Our Inspectors, along with other parish inspectors, cover every inch of their jurisdiction at some point in a typical week. Inspectors are generally assigned to specific areas, and are familiar with construction in their area. They will notice your structure and become suspicious when they are not called to your construction project for an inspection. We also work on citizen's complaints.

5. What powers do the permit offices have to enforce their permitting rules?

If a builder refuses to work with our inspectors, a cease and desist order can be put on the building to stop the job completely. (This is an option of last resort. You will not receive a cease and desist order because you failed an inspection. By cooperating with our inspectors to make the necessary corrections your project can continue.)

If the builder refuses to fix the problems listed on the cease and desist order AND continues to build the job anyway, the owner will be required to attend a court hearing. The end result of the hearing will be that the owner is in violation of the law and additional fees and penalties could be imposed by the court.

6. How are permit fees used? What exactly am I paying for?

The SCRCCC is a revenue neutral program. In other words, the money from your permit fee is only used to cover the operating costs of the program, not to fund any other projects.

State law requires jurisdictions to conduct all inspections and plan reviews with certified staff. Permit fees cover the costs to administer and house our knowledgeable, certified staff.



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Your permit fee is broken down into three areas. First an Administrative Fee portion covers the day to day operations of your jurisdiction's permit office and SCRCCC's administrative staff and operations. Second, a Plan Review Fee covers the cost to have your plans reviewed by a certified plans examiner. Finally, an Inspection Fee covers the cost of all of your inspections for your construction project. (Certain permits do not require plan review, so this portion is not included with those permits.)

All permit fees are reviewed on an annual basis where they could increase or decrease depending on that year's budget. These fees are reviewed at public monthly Code Council meetings. Permit fees for 2008-2009 were reduced, and we hope to continue to reduce our fees.

7. It's my property. I do not have a mortgage. I do not plan to carry insurance on my structure. Why can't I build whatever I want? Why do I have to get my building inspected?

If your construction project is built incorrectly, it could damage surrounding structures and property. The only exception to this is the construction of a farm structure. Because there is often enough space between a farm structure and its surroundings, it is unlikely to cause damage to surrounding structures and property, so these restrictions are relaxed. In addition to this, it is required by law.

8. I think my neighbor is building without a permit. What should I do?

Call our office at 1-866-95-PERMIT (73764) or your local permit office and let us or them investigate. For a list of permit office contacts visit http://www.mypermitnow.org/Parishes_Permit_Info.aspx.

Inspection Questions

1. When should I call for an inspection?

Your approved set of plans will have an attached cover letter. That cover letter is customized for your job site and lists, in detail, exactly when you should call for inspections. It also lists helpful phone numbers to call if you have any questions. If you have misplaced your plans and cover letter, you can download a copy from the customer portal at www.mypermitnow.org. Keep in mind it is required that you keep a copy of the cover letter and approved set of plans on the job site at all times.

2. How far in advance should I call?

You should call as soon as you know when the work will be completed. It makes no difference whether it is days before or the same day, schedule your inspection and an inspector will be sent to your construction project. Same-day inspection requests made before 1 p.m., almost always are completed that day. After 1:00 p.m., we will strive to complete your inspection that same day, and any unfinished inspections are completed the following morning.

By providing your schedule information a few days in advance, we can easily schedule the exact day for our inspectors to visit your construction project.

3. I see that I get 25 inspections with a new construction permit. Will the inspector really come out 25 times?

Our inspectors are certified in a variety of disciplines, and, normally, they can perform multiple inspections in one visit. If you need an inspector to visit your construction project for any reason or concern, we will send one up to the allowed maximum number of visits. . If every inspection was done individually, you would have 13 inspections. Most construction projects will only require six to eight visits So you have a minimum of 12 inspections available for re-inspects or questions and concerns.



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4. Should I try to “game” the system by saying I am ready for an inspection now, when in actuality I will be ready for the inspection tomorrow thinking that by doing so it will get the inspector to my job site “on time.”

NO. Please notify us of the actual date the work will be completed and when you are ready for the inspection. If you say you are ready now, they will come now. Our response time is very good, often within a few hours and sometimes sooner. If one of our inspectors visits your construction project site for a scheduled inspection and the work is not complete, the inspection will be marked as failed. A failed inspection may result in an additional reinspect fee.

We utilize an advanced computerized work order system where our inspectors receive inspection requests and complete reports directly in the field. The computer system even calculates the fastest routes for them based on the new scheduled inspections as they are assigned. This allows the inspectors to move from job site to job site very quickly and efficiently even with new inspections assigned throughout the day.

5. What happens if I fail an inspection?

You will receive a failed inspection report with a list of items not in compliance. Your job is not stopped or halted in anyway, simply fix the necessary items not in compliance and have it re-inspected. Do not just “cover up” the items that need to be corrected until they are re-inspected. Any portion of your project not affected by the failed report can continue.

6. What do I need before I call for an inspection?

Please have your permit number, the address of your construction project, and a contact name and number for our inspector to reach you. You can find it on your permit or you can search for it using the customer portal.

7. What should I do if I accidentally move ahead in the construction process skipping an inspection?

Honesty is the best policy, so call us right away. We will see what stage your construction project is at and try to find an innovative way to find the information we need to determine if it is built to code. We are not out to hurt your construction project, and we will do everything we can do to help you gather this information without costing you additional money or time. Do not make it worse or impossible for us to come up with a solution for you by ignoring the problem or hoping an inspector will not notice.

8. What if I skip a major inspection such as pouring a concrete slab before getting a plumbing or pre-pour inspection? What can you do to work with me on this?

In this example, you could run into a financial problem since this may require an engineer to verify that the slab is code compliant or a plumber to snake cameras down your plumbing. All of which can become expensive.

However, if you simply follow the guidelines provided on the cover letter on your approved set of plans, you will not have any of these problems.

We cannot stress enough to read your cover letter with your approved set of plans. It is accessible anytime in the customer portal at www.mypermitnow.org.



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9. What are my options if I disagree with the results of an inspection? Is there an appeals process?

If you disagree with an inspection, you can request to speak to the building official about it. If you do not agree with the building official's explanation, you can file an appeal that will be heard by the Regional Code Council. If you do not agree with the Regional Code Council, you can file a complaint with the LSUCCC.

Plan Review Questions

1. I have a computer and feel I can draw my own house plans. Can I do this?

Anyone can draw your plans; you do not need an engineer or an architect. But, your plans have to meet the requirements of the building code the same as a set of professional plans. The most important thing is that your plans examiner has the necessary details to see that your construction project is designed in accordance with the building code. If your plans contain all the necessary information and meet the building code requirements, then we will move forward. If they do not, we will provide a list of items and information needed to continue your plan review. Should it become obvious our plans examiners are not getting the necessary information to proceed, we may recommend that you seek a draftsman to complete your plans.

A good rule of thumb to follow when designing your own plans is do not tell us "what" you are building, but tell us "how" you are building it. If you focus on the "how" you will cover the majority of the information we need to review.

2. Why do I need my plans back if they are marked approved?

A customized cover letter with comments concerning when you should call for inspections and other very important notes about the construction project, is attached to your approved set of plans. It is critical that you read these notes and follow them carefully. If you do not, it could cost you time and money. If you have any questions at all about this letter, just call. It does not cost you any money at all to ask questions and speak with a certified plans examiner or inspector.

3. Why do I have to keep my approved set of plans on the job site?

Your contractor needs to build your construction project correctly and according to your approved set of plans. Any plans examiner's warnings and corrections must be followed during constructions. Our inspectors also need to review your plans during their inspection to ensure they are being followed.

4. Are there any references I may consult to read the building code or review specific items if I am planning a project?

You may purchase building code books, which are extensive, technical and possibly overwhelming in the information they provide. Code books that provide quick and easy references for the general public DO NOT EXIST. If you wish to do so, you may purchase copies of these building code books at www.iccSafe.org or your local book store.

Our best suggestion to anyone planning a construction project without an extensive knowledge of the building code is to review modern building and construction books and to review tutorials that teach best practices in current construction methods. For specific questions on the building code and its implementation, consult a certified inspector.



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Contractor Questions

1. What is a contractor?

A contractor is a person who is licensed by the State of Louisiana's State Licensing Board to perform construction projects valued at \$7,500 or more. A home renovator's license covers construction projects \$7,500 to \$75,000. Any construction project over \$75,000 requires a licensed state contractor. Licensed contractors are insured with general liability and workman's comp insurance. You can verify a contractor is properly licensed at:

<http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov/findcontractor.asp>.

2. What service does a contractor provide for me?

A contractor is required by law to guarantee the structure for five years and the mechanical elements for two years. They will also provide insurance coverage for anyone injured while working on your construction project. (The subcontractor should have their own insurance. If they do not, contractors insurance will cover them.) The contractor removes you from any liability whatsoever during construction. Hiring a contractor gives you the benefits of insurance and a warranty on the construction.

A contractor is also responsible for making sure the entire construction project is code compliant. It takes the pressure off of you to make sure your construction project code compliant. If something is built improperly, our inspectors will find it, and the contractor will be required to fix it.

3. Should I get a contractor?

It depends on your individual situation, knowledge and abilities. There are many people who are very capable of doing their own construction projects. If you feel you can do the construction project and are willing to take on the responsibility to construct your project to code, then you have the option to be your own contractor. If you do not feel you are able to take this responsibility, or simply do not want to take the risk, then you should hire a contractor.

4. Can I act as my own contractor?

You may act as your own contractor if you are building your own home or accessory structure on your own property.

General Construction Questions

1. I have applied for a permit and have the resources ready to start the project. When can I actually start Building?

You may begin construction after you have received two items from your local permit office:

1. A permit that has a status of "issued" that must be posted at your project site.
2. An approved set of plans kept at your project site.

2. What is the difference between:

A **Certificate of Completion** is most often used for addition and renovation construction projects. It is issued by SCRCCC and certifies that the project is complete, the structure was built to code, and it was inspected throughout the construction process.



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A **Certificate of Compliance** is issued by SCRCCC and certifies that the entire project was inspected at the proper stages of construction and the structure is building code compliant. A certificate of compliance is required before a jurisdiction can provide a certificate of occupancy.

A **Certificate of Occupancy** is issued by your local permit office and certifies that the structure can be occupied. State law requires that before a jurisdiction can issue a certificate of occupancy on a new dwelling the jurisdiction must first receive a certificate of compliance from the authorized certified building official.

3. What is the difference between a manufactured, mobile, trailer, and modular home?

Manufactured, mobile, and trailer homes are the same. They come in many different shapes sizes and vary widely in quality, but the code treats them as the same type of construction.

A modular home, on the other hand, is built to IRC standard guidelines and to the windspeed for the area where it will be assembled. They will also be inspected by ICC certified inspectors throughout the entire building process.

4. Does the type of shingle I use or how I nail them matter?

Yes! Shingles have to be wind rated. There are many different types of wind ratings, but the most common is astm3161 class F shingle. This type of shingle has been wind tested and is acceptable for our entire regional jurisdiction. Most shingles will have a wind rating, but some do not.

The installation of the shingle is just as important as the type. For the SCRCCC region, the building code states (as of January 2009) that each shingle should be installed with a straight line of six nails along the visible nail line.

5. How do I find out the wind zone requirements for my building site?

Visit www.dps.louisiana.gov/lsucc/windspeed.html and select your parish to view the wind speed restrictions by zip code. However, this information can be rather technical so please contact our plan examiners with any questions concerning your wind speed zone.

6. Is electrical hookup different for a trailer than a regular home?

Both must follow the national electrical code requirements. The only significant difference for a trailer is that power is setup on a remote pole (temp pole) and cannot be attached to the structure as it would be for most homes.

7. What is the difference between temp power, temporary permanent power and permanent power?

Temp power is power provided on a temp pole to aid during the construction process.

Temporary permanent power is permanent power that is turned on in preparation for a final electrical inspection to ensure everything works correctly.

Your power is classified as **permanent power** after you have passed a final electrical inspection that ensures that everything is working correctly.

8. What is a temp pole?

A temp pole at your construction project site provides temporary power during construction. Once the pole is in place, you must schedule an inspection and contact your electric company to setup your account.



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9. Does elevation matter? Is there a required elevation height?

Yes, your elevation matters and there are height requirements. However, this is dictated solely by flood plain management, which is a part of FEMA. You can find your required elevation on the flood plains maps located at *fema.org*. For any further questions, contact your local permit office.

10. How do I acquire an elevation certificate?

A licensed surveyor must perform an elevation shot. Contact your local permit office for a list of surveyors that perform work in your area.

11. How high can I build before I need an engineer?

Many factors can affect this. The height you are building to, your construction method, and a number of other factors may require an engineer. It is best to contact one of our plans examiners with your specific question.

12. I made a dirt mound to build on. How long do I have to wait before I can build on it?

There is not a "time requirement", but rather one of three things is required:

- You may pour a traditional slab anytime, but the footings must be 12 inches within the natural soil.
- You may order a compaction test. Once the test results show your ground is 95% compacted, you may begin construction.
- You may install a post tension slab immediately without any requirements. This is an engineered form of foundation.

13. How do I find out what the building restrictions are in my neighborhood?

Contact your local permit office.

14. When can I occupy the structure?

After you receive a certificate of occupancy.

15. When should I insure my project?

It would be wise and most likely required (if you received bank financing) to have insurance on the property before construction begins. Talk to your insurance agent for the proper type of insurance and amount.

16. Do I need to contact the health board about my project?

Yes, but your local permit office will specify what the health board's involvement will be.

17. How do I connect water to my structure?

Contact your local water company to install a meter. You will need an inspection before connecting water service to your structure.

18. How do I connect gas to my structure?

Contact your gas company to install a meter. You will need an inspection before connecting gas service to your structure.



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19. What are my options for Sewage? Can I connect to city sewer or build a cess pool in my yard?

It depends on the ordinances of where you live. Contact your local permit office.