

Uniform Construction Code

When the UCC Requires Permits and Inspections

As a general rule, the UCC requires that a property owner or the owner's authorized agent obtain a UCC construction or building permit before commencing any work and that the work be inspected in the following cases:

- Construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, movement, demolition or change in the occupancy of a commercial building, structure or facility;
- Construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, movement, demolition or change in the occupancy of a residential building;
- Erection, installation, enlargement, alteration, repair, removal, replacement or conversion of any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system regulated by the UCC;
- Construction or installation of a swimming pool, hot tub or spa;
- Site preparation, foundation construction, utility connections, alterations, additions, repairs and changes of occupancy of manufactured and industrialized housing.

Under the UCC, a building, structure or facility cannot be used or occupied without a UCC certificate of occupancy first being issued.

Emergency repairs or replacement of equipment may be made without first applying for a permit so long as a permit application is submitted to the building code official within 3 business days after the repair or replacement.

Certain work is exempted from the UCC's requirements of permits and inspections. A general summary of exempted items follows, those for commercial construction being on Page 2 and those for residential construction on Page 3. **A property owner should not assume that work is exempt without first making appropriate inquiry, as performance of work for which a UCC permit is required without first obtaining a permit will subject the owner to enforcement proceedings and possibly additional costs.** See 34 Pa. Code § 403.42 for commercial and industrial buildings and 34 Pa. Code § 403.62 for residential dwellings.

Exemptions from permit requirements as to commercial and industrial construction include -

- Building construction for fences not over 6' high, oil derricks, certain retaining walls, certain water tanks, sidewalks and driveways not more than 30" above grade and that are not located over a basement or story below it, painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finishing work, temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery, certain prefabricated swimming pools, shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes that do not include service systems, swings and other playground equipment accessory to 1- or 2-family homes, certain window awnings, movable cases, counters and partitions that are not over 5 feet 9 inches in height, window replacement without structural change;
- Electrical work for minor repair and maintenance work including replacement of lamps or connection of approved portable equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles, electrical equipment used for radio and television transmissions and installation of a temporary system for the testing or servicing of electrical equipment or apparatus;
- Gas work including a portable heating appliance or replacement of a minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make the equipment unsafe;
- Mechanical work involving a portable heating appliance, portable ventilation equipment, portable cooling unit, portable evaporative cooler, steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment governed under the UCC, replacement of a part that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe and a self-contained refrigeration system containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant and placed into action by motors that are not more than 1 hp;
- Plumbing repairs including stopping leaks in a drain and a water, soil, waste or vent pipe (this not including defective pipe to be removed and replaced with new material) and cleaning stoppages or repairing leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and removal and installation of water closets, faucets and lavatories if the valves or pipes are not replaced or rearranged;
- An ordinary repair (ordinary repair does not include cutting away a wall, partition or portion of a wall, removal or cutting of any structural beam or load-bearing support, removal or change of any required means of egress, rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements and addition to or alteration, replacement or relocation of any standpipe, water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, electric wiring or mechanical).

Exemptions from permit requirements as to residential construction include -

Ordinary repairs, but ordinary repairs do *not* include:

- Cutting away a wall, partition or portion of a wall
- Removal or cutting of any structural beam or load-bearing support
- Removal or change of any required means of egress
- Rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements
- Adding to, altering, replacing or relocating piping, sewer, wiring, etc.

Building construction, replacement or repairs for

- Fences that are not more than 6' high
- Retaining walls not over 4' high measured from the lowest grade level
- Some water tanks (5,000 gal. or less capacity) supported directly on grade
- Certain sidewalks and driveways that are 30" or less above adjacent grade
- Exterior or interior painting or papering
- Exterior or interior tiling, carpeting, flooring, cabinets and counter tops
- Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24" deep
- Swings and playground equipment accessory to 1- or 2-family dwelling
- Certain window awnings supported by an exterior wall
- Replacing glass in a window or door (replacement glass must meet Code)
- Installing or replacing a window, door, garage door with no new opening
- Installing or replacing a storm window or storm door with no new opening
- Replacing existing roof material that does not exceed 25% of total area
- Repair or replacement of a porch or stoop that does not support a roof
- Installing additional roll or BATT insulation
- Replacing existing siding or rain water gutters and leaders
- Installing an uncovered deck if the deck floor is 30" or less above grade

Minor electrical work for

- Replacing lamps
- Connecting approved portable equipment to approved permanent receptacle
- Minor replacement of a receptacle, switch or lighting fixture (check limits)
- Replacing installed equipment such as doorbells, communication systems
- Installing, altering or rearranging communications wiring
- Replacing dishwashers or kitchen range hoods
- Installing battery-powered smoke detectors

Minor gas work for

- Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliances
- Replacing a minor part that does not alter approval of equipment
- Portable fuel cell appliance not hooked to fixed piping system/power grid

More exemptions from permit requirements as to residential construction include -

Mechanical work or equipment for

- Portable heating or ventilation appliances
- A portable cooling unit or a portable evaporative cooler
- Steam, hot or chilled water piping within equipment governed by the UCC
- Replacing any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment
- Certain smaller self-contained refrigeration systems
- Portable fuel cell appliance not hooked to fixed piping system/power grid

Plumbing work for

- Replacing bib valves if specified replacement valves are provided
- Refinishing of existing fixtures
- Replacing ball cocks
- Repair of leaks
- Clearance of stoppages
- Replacing faucets or working parts of faucets
- Replacing valves other than shower or combination shower/bath valves
- Replacing traps
- Replacing a water closet, lavatory or kitchen sink
- Replacing a domestic clothes washer or dishwasher

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning work for

- Replacement of motors, pumps and fans of the same capacity
- Repair and replacement of heating, supply and return piping and radiation elements which do not require rearrangement of the piping system
- Repair and replacement of duct work
- Repair and replacement of air conditioning equipment and systems
- Repair and replacement of control devices for heating and air conditioning equipment
- Replacement of kitchen range hoods
- Replacement of clothes dryers if there is no change in fuel type, location or electrical requirements
- Replacement of stoves and ovens if there is no change in fuel type, location or electrical characteristics