



**WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?  
DEPARTMENT OF CODE ADMINISTRATION**

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**Revised 7/20/10**

This information is provided to assist citizens and those who perform work in the City of Alexandria to:

1. Determine when permits are needed for various new construction, remodeling and home repair activities;
2. Describe the kinds of permits that must be obtained prior to performing the work activity;
3. Outline the procedures for obtaining required permits;
4. Describe when inspections are required and when approvals are needed by other City review agencies.

The City of Alexandria, and all jurisdictions within the Commonwealth of Virginia, enforce the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). The USBC is based on nationally recognized model codes published by the International Code Council (ICC). The model codes are made part of the USBC through the regulatory process known as incorporation by reference. **On May 1, 2008**, the 2006 USBC\2006 International Building Code (IBC), the International Residential Code (IRC), the International Existing Building Code (IEBC); the International Fire Prevention Code (IFPC), the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) and the International Trade Codes (IPC, IMC and Electrical) went into effect for all new projects and permits. The following are selected sections of the 2006 USBC that affect citizens in their efforts to obtain building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and fire protection system permits. **Please note that approvals by other review agencies, Planning and Zoning [P&Z], Board of Architectural Review [BAR], Transportation and Environmental Services [T&ES] or the Health Department, may be required even when permits are not required by the USBC.**

Chapter 3 of the USBC/IBC defines use group classifications for the purposes of construction and building maintenance. The use and occupancy of a structure dictates when a permit is required and when exceptions to permit requirements apply. To assist you in reading this document, this is noted by **Residential** (ie: single family homes, duplexes, townhouses and multifamily condominium or rental dwelling units) or **Non-Residential** (all commercial type occupancies and common areas for multifamily condominium and rental buildings). Where there is no designation, the permit requirements are the same for residential and non-residential uses.

**WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?**

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' **108.1 Permit Application:** An application for a permit shall be submitted to the code official for the following activities. These activities shall not commence without a permit being issued in accordance with Section 110.

1. Construct, alter or enlarge a structure. This includes the installation, alteration, or cutting away of any:
  - § wall, partition or portion thereof;
  - § any structural components to include any beam or load-bearing support;
  - § the repair or replacement of any required component of a fire or smoke rated assembly (to include drywall);
  - § the alteration of any required means of egress system;
  - § the addition to, alteration of, replacement of or relocation of any standpipe, water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas or oil, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, electric wiring, or mechanical work; or any other equipment regulated by the USBC.
2. For a change of occupancy, application for a permit shall be made when a new certificate of occupancy is required by Section 103.3 to include: when the USBC requires a greater degree of structural strength, fire protection, means of egress, ventilation or sanitation. Note: applicable flood load or flood-resistant construction requirements may apply.
3. Movement of a lot line that increases the hazard to or decreases the level of safety of an existing building or structure in comparison to the building code under which such building or structure was constructed.
4. Removal or disturbing of any asbestos containing materials during the construction or demolition of a building or structure including additions.
5. For emergency construction, alterations or equipment replacement, the permit application shall be submitted the next working day following such emergency. (See City of Alexandria Emergency Repair Policy)

**Section §108.2 - Exceptions to Permit Requirements:\*\***

1. Installation of wiring and equipment which operates at less than 50 volts for network powered broadband communications systems or that is exempt under Section 102.3(1) -wiring related to radio, broadcast or cable television, telecommunications or information service transmission under the ownership and control of the service provider or its affiliates and located on the public rights of way or private property for which the service provider has rights of occupancy and entry- except when the installation is located in a plenum or penetrates fire rated or smoke protected construction or is a component of any of the following:
  - a. Fire Alarm System
  - b. Fire Detection System
  - c. Fire Suppression System
  - d. Smoke Control System
  - e. Fire Protection Supervisory System
  - f. Fire Damper
  - g. Elevator Fire Safety Control System
  - h. Door Control System
  - i. Access or egress control system or delayed egress locking or latching system
2. Construction of detached utility sheds used as tool or storage sheds, playhouses, similar uses when accessory to all use groups except Use Group F or H and the floor area does not exceed 150 square feet (14m<sup>2</sup>) of building area and 102 inches (8'6" or 2591mm) in wall height. **NOTE:** Setbacks, Height and size limitations require Zoning approval (703.746.4333).
3. Detached pre-fabricated buildings housing the equipment of exempted public utilities, provided such does not exceed 150 square feet (14m<sup>2</sup>) of building area and 102 inches (8'6" or 2591mm) in wall height.
4. Tents and air-supported structures that cover an area of 900 square feet (84m<sup>2</sup>) or less, including all connecting areas or spaces with a *common means of egress* or entrance and with an occupant load of 50 or less persons. **NOTE:** A Fire Prevention Code Permit (FPP) is required for tents exceeding 200 square feet. Temporary membrane structures, tents and canopies are permitted under FPP only and inspected by the Fire Marshal office. A separate building permit is no longer required.
5. Wooden and metal fences and privacy walls not part of a building structure or the barrier for a swimming pool, provided such fences and privacy walls do not exceed six feet in height above the finished grade. Ornamental post caps shall not be considered to contribute to the height of the fence or privacy wall and

shall be permitted to extend beyond the six feet height measurement. **Note:** Fences must comply with zoning regulations for openness, height and location. Contact Planning and Zoning (703.746.4333). **Masonry, concrete block and materials other than wood require a permit as noted on Page 6 of this handout.**

6. Retaining walls supporting less than two feet of unbalanced fill. This exception shall not apply to any wall supporting a surcharge other than ordinary unbalanced fill or impounding Class I, II or II-A liquids.
7. Swimming pools which are 150 square feet or less in surface area, 5,000 gallons or less in water capacity, and are less than 24 inches in depth.
8. **Ordinary repairs** which include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Replacement of windows and doors that are not required to be fire rated in residential uses where serving a single dwelling unit. \*\* See Note for historic buildings/preservation districts.
  - b. Replacement of plumbing fixtures in all use groups when there is no alteration to the water supply and distribution systems, sanitary drainage systems or vent systems.
  - c. Replacement of general use snap switches, dimmer and control switches, 125 volt-15 or 20 ampere receptacles, luminaries (lighting fixtures) and paddle ceiling fans in residential uses when serving a single dwelling unit.
  - d. Replacement of mechanical appliances in residential uses provided such equipment **is not fueled by gas or oil** and when serving a single dwelling unit. **Note:** Installation or changes to existing duct system requires a permit. Changes in venting to exterior may require BAR approval.
  - e. Replacement of an unlimited amount of roof coverings and/or the installation or replacement of siding on detached single family homes, townhouses and duplexes. And, the replacement of 100 square feet or less of roof covering in all other use groups. \*\* See Note for historic building/preservation districts..
  - f. Replacement of 100 square feet or less of roof decking on single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes, unless the decking to be replaced was required to be fire-retardant-treat (FRT) or protected in some other way to form a fire-rated wall termination at the time of construction.
  - g. Installation or replacement of floor finishes in all occupancies.
  - h. Replacement of Class C interior wall or ceiling finishes installed in Groups A, E and I and replacement of all classes of interior wall or ceiling finishes in other groups.
  - i. Installation of cabinets in all occupancies.
  - j. Application of paint or wallpaper.
  - k. Other repair work deemed by the building official to be minor and ordinary which does not adversely affect public health or general safety.

**\*\*Note:** Application or notice to the code official is not required prior to performing ordinary repairs to structures. However, the approval by other review agencies, Planning and Zoning [P&Z], Board of Architectural Review [BAR], Transportation and Environmental Services [T&ES] or the Health Department may be required even when permits are not required by the USBC. **As of June 1, 2010, Section 8-1-22 of the City Code requires permits for the installation and replacement of siding, roofing and windows in designated historic districts or designated buildings over 100 years old.**

## **PERMIT PROCESS**

Work requiring a permit shall be performed only after obtaining the permit from the Permit Center, City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 4200, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, 703.746.4200; 703.838.3880 (fax). **Stop Work Orders** may be issued for any work begun before the required permit(s) are issued or for work that exceeds the scope of the issued permit(s). In addition to the regular permit fee, an administrative fee of \$125 for residential work and \$250 for all other work is charged to the applicant to cover the administrative costs of a Stop Work Order. The State Board for Contractors is notified whenever licensed or unlicensed contractors perform work without permits, or when work exceeds the scope of the issued permits without proper City authorization.

When plans or drawings are required for building, mechanical, plumbing, electrical or fire protection systems projects, five sets of plans, no larger than 24"x36" must be submitted for review. When a review by the Health Department is required, six sets of plans must be submitted. The plans must be clear, dimensioned, and complete with all aspects of the job - to include the trade work. Plans shall be drawn to a minimum of 1/8"

scale, preferably 1/4" scale. Section details and unit plans for hotels and multi-family structures - condos and/or rental apartments - shall be 1/4" scale.

Application for permit may be on paper or where available, electronically. Electronic applications for sign permits can occur on or after July 1, 2010. The master tradesman must sign plumbing, electrical and mechanical permit applications before the permit may be issued. These requirements protect property owners, their families and neighbors from the effects of repairs or additions which violate building codes and constitute potential hazards to life and property. Because of the inherent dangers in the installation and maintenance of electrical items, the Building Official recommends that the services of a licensed master electrician be utilized for any project involving electrical wiring. Like all contractors, the master electrician must present his license and certification to staff in the Permit Center/Code Administration before a permit will be issued. As stated above, the master electrician must also sign the permit application.

Permits are issued in the name of the property owner(s) and remain the owner=s property throughout the construction project. A contractor serves as an agent of the owner and may obtain permits for the owner. However, the permit is still issued in the name of the property owner(s) and it is the property owner=s legal responsibility to ensure that only licensed contractors and sub-contractors perform the work, and that required inspections are obtained. This ensures that the property owner is kept informed of the conditions on the property. Contractors may request to be removed as the contractor of record for a job; however, they cannot cancel the owner=s permit.

Property owners who wish to perform their own work may do so by completing a Property Owner=s Affidavit. **It is a violation of State Law for a property owner to obtain a permit in his/her own name and subsequently contract with another party to perform the work unless the contractor is duly authorized and licensed in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Alexandria.** In addition, the property owner must notify the Code Administration when a contractor is added to, or changed on, an issued permit so that licensing information can be verified. Failing to do this may result in the permit being voided. Allowing an unlicensed person to perform work, or allowing a licensed contractor to perform work outside of their license designation, on a permit issued under a Property Owner=s Affidavit, voids the permit and subjects both the property owner and the contractor to criminal prosecution. Licensed contractors performing work outside of their license designation, and unlicensed persons performing work, are reported to the State Board for Contractors for investigation and prosecution. For the purposes of securing a permit, licensed means having both a State Contractor=s license, with the proper designations for the work performed, and a City of Alexandria Business License. If a contractor does work at less than \$25,000 annually, he/she may be eligible to use the business license from another Virginia jurisdiction provided that he/she registers as a reciprocity contractor with the City=s Business License Bureau, **703.746.3903**. **Before hiring a contractor, verify State Contractor License with DPOR by calling 804.367.8511 or checking the DPOR website on [www.dpor.virginia.gov](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov).**

#### **ASBESTOS REMOVAL/ENCAPSULATION**

Virginia law requires certain structures constructed on or before January 1, 1985, to be inspected for the presence of asbestos before any rehabilitation, remodeling or demolition may occur (USBC ' 110.3). This requirement applies to larger residential units, most commercial structures, and when single family dwellings or residential housing with four or fewer units, are converted to commercial or public development use. When asbestos is discovered during construction, renovation or repair jobs on any type of buildings, a building permit must be obtained to properly remove or encapsulate the asbestos in accordance with State and Federal requirements. **Exception:** when the amount of regulated asbestos-containing material is less than 260 linear feet on pipes or less than 160 square feet on other facility components or less than 35 cubic feet off facility components where the length or area could not be previously measured.

#### **LEAD BASED PAINT ABATEMENT**

There are no USBC permit or inspection requirements for the removal or encapsulation of lead based paint. Virginia does not require localities to obtain a "lead risk assessment or inspection" affidavits (such is done with Asbestos) or proof that a contractor has obtained the Lead-Safe Certification prior to issuing permits for residential renovations. On April 22, 2010, a Federal regulation went into requiring training and certification requirements for contractors who perform lead abatement work. Virginia's Department of Professional and

Occupational Regulations (DPOR) has had a contractor licensing designation/requirement for Lead Abatement since 2006. The licensing requirements for Virginia are standards of conduct for contractors to follow; they don't provide "enforcement" direction to localities. Before hiring a contractor for residential work, you may want to discuss how lead based paint remediation will be handled. You should also verify with DPOR that the contractor is licensed for the work you wish them to perform (804.367.8511 or [www.dpor.virginia.gov](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov)). The following agencies can provide information on Lead Based Paint that may be of interest to you: EPA (1-800-424-LEAD) or [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH)-1-877-668-7987 or [www.vahealth.org/leadsafe](http://www.vahealth.org/leadsafe).

**ALLOWED HOURS OF CONSTRUCTION/NOISE AFFIDAVIT**

A noise affidavit must be completed before a permit may be issued. The purpose of the affidavit is to inform the permit holder, person obtaining the permit and all workers associated with the permit, of the allowed hours for construction per Section 11-5-4 of the City Code. A copy of the completed affidavit must be posted with the permit. When construction is performed by contractors or developers on residential or commercial properties, the hours of operation are as follows:

	<b>Regular Construction</b>	<b>Pile Driving</b>
§ Monday - Friday	7:00 am - 6:00 pm	9:00 am - 6:00 pm
§ Saturdays	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	10:00 am - 4:00 pm
§ Sundays	Prohibited	Prohibited

Construction is also prohibited on the following designated holidays: New Years Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day/July 4<sup>th</sup>, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Homeowners are not subject to the same time/date restrictions as contractors provided that they are personally conducting the repairs or improvements to their own home. Violations of the construction hours/noise ordinance may be reported to the 24 hour Nuisance Hotline on **703.836.0041** or to the **non-emergency number for the Alexandria Police 703.838.4444**. Hotline or Police communications staff will determine whether an immediate investigation is required by on-duty police or fire personnel, or whether the investigation will be referred to Code staff for follow-up on the next regular business day. Noise Waiver permits are issued by T&ES/Department of Environmental Quality **703.746-4065**.

**RODENT CONTROL**

Before a permit for any land disturbance or demolition work may be issued, the property owner must provide proof that rodent abatement measures have been, or will be, in place for seven days prior to the work starting. **These abatement measures must remain in effect for the duration of the construction project.**

**PERMIT APPROVAL TIME-FRAMES**

Work on permits must commence within six months of the issue date or the permit expires. A new code section (' 110.6) allows the building official to revoke a permit when work on the site is not commenced within six months after the permit is issued or if the authorized work is suspended or abandoned for a period of six months. However, trade permits will not be revoked if the building permit is still valid. Likewise, a valid building permit keeps the trade permit active. Extensions may be granted upon written request of the applicant provided substantive progress can be demonstrated - typically proof of an approved inspection within the six month period. Work on permits issued for the construction of detached single family dwellings, additions, and residential accessory structures, must be completed with three years of the issue date (' 110.7). Upon written request, the building official may grant extensions of time if the applicant can demonstrate substantive progress - typically an approved inspection within a six month period.

**Expired permits cannot be extended.** When there is a delay in the construction process, a written request to extend the permit must be approved by the Building Official **prior to** the expiration date. **The fee to extend a permit is currently \$100 for residential projects under the IRC and \$150 for all other permits. (Fee subject to change)**

When work on a structure has been authorized by either the Old and Historic or Parker-Gray Architectural Review Boards, the approval is valid for one year. Unless substantial construction work has been performed within that period, the approval expires regardless of whether the issued construction permit is still valid.

Issued permits may be revoked by the building official for any false statement, misrepresentation of fact, abandonment of work, failure to complete construction as required by ' 110.7 or incorrect information supplied by the applicant in the application or construction documents on which the approval was based.

## **INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS**

Inspection requests are the responsibility of the permit holder/property owner. Section 113.3 of the USBC identifies when inspections are required. It is highly recommended that property owners discuss with their contractors who is to be responsible for obtaining required permits and inspections and to include this decision in the written contract agreement. It is also recommended that the last payment to contractors be contingent upon receipt of an **approved final inspection** from the City for the work performed. At minimum, work must be inspected before it is concealed and upon completion of the work. Failing to get approved inspections at the appropriate stage of construction may require work to be opened up or removed for inspection purposes and/or may affect insurance coverage on the structure. Each issued permit must receive an approved final inspection.

### **Required Inspections:**

1. Footing excavations and rebar/reinforcement material prior to placement of concrete.
2. Foundation Systems during construction to assure compliance with USBC. **NOTE:** Section 8-1-12 of the City Code requires a Wall Check before construction proceeds beyond the first story above grade.\*
3. Preparatory work **prior to** placement of concrete.\*
4. Structural members and fasteners **prior to concealment**.\*
5. Electrical, mechanical, plumbing, HVAC and fire protection equipment and systems **prior to concealment**.\*
6. Energy conservation materials (insulation) **prior to concealment**.\*
7. Final inspection after the work is complete.

\*Work concealed prior to inspection may be required to be exposed for inspection purposes. Unless approved prior to permit issuance, third party inspections **are not** permitted. Inspections **will not** be conducted based on photographs taken prior to concealing the work. Without an approved wall check, construction beyond the first story above grade is at the Permit Holder's risk. Framing inspections **will not** be approved until an approved wall check is on the construction site.

Inspections may be scheduled and cancelled 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling the AACCESS@ system on **703.838.4900**. Inspections on Fire Protection System Permits may be scheduled on-line or by calling **703.746.4200**. FPS permits cannot be scheduled via AACCESS.@ If the AACCESS@ system is not functioning, you may call **703.746.4200** to schedule inspections. A schedule of daily inspections is available on-line on [www.alexandria.gov/fire/code](http://www.alexandria.gov/fire/code). This schedule is updated throughout the day and also provides inspection results and links to Permit Tracker and the GIS Parcel Viewer. The Daily Inspector workload can be viewed on the Code website which also provides Inspector contact information. Using Access, inspection results can be provided to multiple interested parties by email, fax or phone call.

## **ZONING REQUIREMENTS**

For questions about alterations to existing structures, sheds and detached garages, and/or construction of new additions, fences or accessory structures, please call the office of Planning and Zoning at **703.746.4333**. Staff can provide information on the applicable yard requirements, building height, and allowable building area permitted on a lot. Temporary signs/banners for property leasing, grand openings, etc, must be approved by Zoning before being erected. If the zoning requirements are unable to be met, appeals may be filed with the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). The BZA hears appeals on the second Thursday of each month, except August. For further information on the BZA process, please contact the Planning Department on **703.746.4333**.

## **BOARD of ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

For information about construction requirements in either the Old and Historic or the Parker-Gray District, please call **703.746.3833**. Exterior alterations that are visible from a right-of-way must be approved by the appropriate Board of Architectural Review (BAR). Permits required by the USBC must be obtained from the Permit Center located in the Code Administration Office (Room 4200, City Hall) after receiving approval from

the appropriate BAR. BAR approval alone is not sufficient authorization to begin the work without required permits. Section 8-1-22 of the City Code now requires permits for the replacement of siding, roofing materials and windows on buildings in designated historic districts.

## **TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE REQUIREMENTS**

Section 5-1-224(e) of the Alexandria City Code was amended to require the submission of a grading plan with permit applications for:

1. The construction of a new home;
2. The construction of an addition to an existing home where either
  - a. the addition exceeds the area of the existing building footprint by 100% or more;
  - b. the construction of the addition results in less than 50% of the existing first floor exterior walls in their entirety remaining;
3. Changes to the existing grade elevation of 1 foot or greater;
4. Changes to the existing drainage patterns; or
5. Land disturbances of 2,500 square feet or greater.

The grading plan must be prepared by a professional engineer or land surveyor licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. If the land disturbance is greater than 2,500 square feet, the grading plan will be subject to the requirements of Article XIII of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance. More information is available at <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanRequirements.pdf>. The grading plan checklist is also available on the City's website:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanChecklist.pdf>, or can be obtained by calling the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at **703.746.4064**. A review fee of \$500 must be submitted with the Grading Plan. For more information on Erosion Control and The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, please call the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services on **703.746.4025**.

**Waivers: The Director of Transportation & Environmental Services may waive the requirement for a grading plan if the proposed improvements meet the above requirements of (2), (3) or (4) only. Waivers will be granted only where the applicant has demonstrated that the proposed construction will not create a nuisance to adjacent or downstream properties either public or private and that any existing drainage problems on adjacent or downstream properties either public or private will not be exacerbated by proposed construction. No waiver will be granted for the construction of a new home or where land disturbance will be 2,500 square feet or greater.**

**BEFORE YOU DIG....you must call Miss Utility 72 hours in advance - 1.800.552.7001.**

## **SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT TAX EXEMPTION**

Property owners can qualify for a tax exemption for the installation of solar equipment that is designed and used primarily for the purpose of providing for the collection and use of solar energy for water heating, space heating or cooling or other applications which would otherwise require a conventional source of energy. Qualifying solar energy systems include solar heating and hot water systems, passive solar energy systems, south facing windows used as solar collectors, trombe walls (a sun facing wall designed to collect solar energy and act as a thermal mass for heating the structure), greenhouses integrated into the heating system of the structure, thermal storage systems, movable insulation, and shading devices designed primarily for shading windows to assist in summer cooling.

Depending on your project, Building, Electrical, Plumbing or Mechanical permits may be required by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) for the installation of the solar energy equipment, facilities or devices. Permit applications and plans must be reviewed and approved by several City review agencies before the work can commence. Generally, most reviews for solar energy work can be processed as a "walk-thru" or expedited review. However, the proposed installation of equipment in designated historic districts requires the approval of BAR staff or the appropriate Board of Architectural Review which may include a public hearing before the work is authorized. Please contact Katy Parker, Urban Planner III, on **703.746.3819** for more information on BAR requirements.

Qualifying equipment or system installations will entitle the property owner to a tax exemption for five years. The value of the tax exemption is based on the cost or a percentage of the cost of the installation and the solar equipment, facilities or devices installed. The percentage or formula for the exemption is set out in the 13 VAC 5-200-10 et seq. of the Virginia Administrative Code. There is no cost to apply for a tax exemption.

To apply for the tax exemption, an application for **Solar Energy Equipment, Facilities or Devices Certification for Real or Personal Property Tax Exemption** must be completed and submitted to Code Administration along with a copy of the plans, specifications, and drawings of the solar energy equipment, facilities or devices for which certification is requested. The brief narrative description of the function of the solar energy equipment, facilities or devices must include the rated capacity of installation, intended performance levels, and estimated energy and cost savings. The cost of the installed solar energy equipment, facilities or devices (materials and labor) and documentation of such costs must also be provided. Receipts, cancelled checks, or contracts for equipment installation may be used to document costs for the purposes of calculating the tax exemption.

Additional information on requirements for permit applications and the Solar Energy Equipment Tax Exemption form can be obtained from the Permit Center, 4<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 4200, **703.746.4200**, or downloaded from [alexandriava.gov/code](http://alexandriava.gov/code). Once the equipment is installed and all required inspections are approved for conformance with the USBC, the Department of Code Administration shall approve and certify the exemption application to the Department of Real Estate Assessments. The Assessor will review the application and calculate the value of the tax exemption and notify the applicant by letter of the final approval of the tax exemption, the amount, and the time period for which the tax exemption shall apply.

#### PERMIT GUIDE

The guide below lists construction projects, repairs or alterations frequently undertaken by property owners. It is not intended to describe all possible projects to be undertaken. The chart indicates when permits and plans are required by the USBC prior to beginning the project. When permits are not required, approval by BAR or other review agencies is noted. For questions about whether permits, plans or approvals by Zoning, BAR or the Health Department are required for particular intended work, please call the Permit Center at **703.746.4200**. For specific questions about regulations, permit requirements or approvals required by review agencies, please call:

- § Planning Department 703.746.4666, Zoning 703.746.4333, BAR 703.746.3833
- § Health Department 703.746.4400
- § Transportation and Environmental Services Permit Section 703.746.4035
- § Miss Utility 800.552.7001
- § Environmental Quality 703.746.4065
- § Site Plan Coordinator 703.746.4064
- § Archeology 703.838.4399

**NOTE:** This publication is intended solely as a guide and is not justification for not complying with current code requirements or City policies. It does not address every type of construction or renovation project. Policies pertaining to most frequently asked questions are posted on the Code Admin website ([alexandriava.gov](http://alexandriava.gov)). Subscribing to e-News, a free electronic service offered on the City Website, will ensure that you automatically receive new, amended or revised policy memos by e-mail. For questions or clarification, please call Code Administration on **703.746.4200**.

#### City of Alexandria Design Criteria

- § Ground Snow Load: 30 PSF
- § Frost Line Depth: 24 inches
- § Wind Speed: 90 mph
- § Maximum Rain Fall: 3.2 in/hr



B = Building Permit Required  
M = Mechanical Permit Required

E = Electrical Permit Required  
P = Plumbing Permit Required



D = Demolition Permit Required                      S= Sign Permit Required  
 FPP = Fire Prevention Code Permit Required      FPS = Fire Protection Systems Permit Required  
 N = No Permit/Plan Required                      Y = Plans Required              GP = Grading Plan Required  
 + Structures in the Old and Historic and Parker-Gray districts may require BAR approval (703.746.4666)

**ACCESSORY BUILDINGS / STRUCTURES**

	<b>PERMIT</b>	<b>PLAN</b>
Build shed or other structure intended for tools or storage, equal to or less than 150 sq. feet and less than 8'6" high as an accessory to a home or uses other than F or H. <b>Note:</b> Zoning approval required for side and rear yard setbacks	N+	N
Build any other shed	B+	Y
Build a Tree House or Play House, less than 150 sq. feet and less than 8'6" high as an accessory to a home. <b>Note:</b> Zoning approval required for side and rear yard setbacks	N+	N
Non-mechanized Playground or Recreational Equipment such as swing sets, sliding boards, climbing bars, jungle gyms, skateboard ramps and similar equipment where no admission fee is charged for its use or admittance to the area where the equipment is located.	N+	N
Install swimming pool more than 150 sq. ft in surface area, more than 5,000 gallons in water capacity and deeper than 24 inches ( An annual Fire Prevention Code Permit (FPP) may be required depending upon the amount of chemicals stored at the site. Call 703.746.4200 to determine.) Residential pools, spas and hot tubs must be enclosed by a fence/equivalent barrier at least 6' in height or must have a lockable cover. <b>Note:</b> Health Department Approval is required for public use pools and spas. Method of water supply and discharge for all pools must be shown on plans for approval by T&ES.	B/E/P	Y
Install a residential hot tub or spa If hot tub or spa is located on a new or existing deck or floor framing, structural calculations are required to ensure that imposed maximum loads can be tolerated <b>Note:</b> Health Department Approval is required fencing and/or access control device for private hot tubs/spas. Residential pools, spas and hot tubs must be enclosed by a fence/equivalent barrier at least 6' in height or must have a lockable cover. Method of water supply and discharge must be shown on plans for approval by T&ES.	B/E/P	Y
Construct/Erect fence of any type as part of a swimming pool barrier. <b>Note:</b> Health Department Approval Required	B	Y
Construct/Erect non-masonry Fences 6' and under and not part of a swimming pool barrier <b>Note:</b> Must check with Zoning for set-back requirements	N+	N
Construct/Erect non-masonry Fences over 6' or that are part of a swimming pool barrier	B	Y
Construct Privacy Wall of Masonry, Brick, or Block	B	Y
Construct or repair retaining wall two feet or less in height measured from the bottom of the footing and not supporting surcharge or impounding Class I, II or	N	N

II-A liquids.

Construct or repair retaining wall more than two feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing, or that is supporting surcharge or impounding Class I, II or II-A liquids.	B	Y
Construct Outdoor Barbecue	B	Y
Install or Replace a Natural Gas Barbecue	B/M	Y
Construct Elevated Tennis Court	B	Y
Construct Tennis Court on Grade <b>Note:</b> Must check with Zoning for set-back requirements	N	N
Construct Gazebo or Portico	B	Y
Erect Trellis or Grape Arbor	N	N
Erect freestanding Flagpole, radio, cable or TV antenna over 12 feet in height	B	Y
Erect freestanding or roof top flagpole or antenna less than 12 feet in height	N+	N
Install a dish antenna more than 2 feet in diameter	B	GP

**IMPROVEMENT AND REPAIR PROJECTS**

Install or replace gutter and/or downspout <b>Note:</b> Roof drainage must direct water away from building foundation, but must not go onto the property of another or across a public sidewalk.	N	N
Install/Replace exterior siding on multi-family and commercial structures	B	N
Install/Replace exterior siding on residential townhouses, duplexes and single family detached homes only <b>NOT</b> in designated BAR Districts	N	N
Install/Replace exterior siding on residential townhouses, duplexes and single family detached homes only <b>IN</b> designated BAR Districts	B	Y
Exterior Paint <b>Note:</b> Unpainted brick structures located in a BAR Districts, must have BAR approval prior to painting	N+	N
Interior Paint or Wallpaper - application or removal	N	N
Lead Based Paint Remediation	N	N
Replace Roof Covering		
§ single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes <b>NOT</b> in BAR Districts	N	N
§ single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes <b>IN</b> Designated BAR Districts	B	Y
§ multi-family and commercial structures	B	N
§ if replacement is 100 square feet or less, no permit is required	N	N
See Code Administration memo dated 5/25/05 for requirements on membrane or modified bitumen roof coverings.		
Replace 100 square feet or less of non-FRT roof decking on		
• single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes <b>NOT</b> in designated BAR Districts	N	N
• single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes <b>IN</b> Designated BAR Districts	B	Y

§ Permit Required if decking is fire-retardant-treated (FRT) or protected in some other way to form a fire-rated wall termination	B	N
Patch Roof less than 100 square feet	N+	N
Install storm windows or doors in townhouses, duplexes and single family detached homes only	N+	N
Window replacement - no change in size of opening and not required to be fire rated		
• single family homes, duplexes, townhouses and multifamily when serving a single dwelling unit <b>NOT</b> in designated BAR Districts	N	N
• single family detached homes, townhouses and duplexes <b>IN</b> Designated BAR Districts	B	Y
§ all other uses	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Glazing within a 24" arch of a door in the closed position that serves a closet or storage area deeper than 3' shall be safety glazing. Windows in walls enclosing a stairway landing or within 60" of the top or bottom of an interior or exterior stair must be safety glazed. (USBC/IBC R308.4)		
Window Replacement - change in size of opening for <b>all uses</b>	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Glazing within a 24" arch of a door in the closed position that serves a closet or storage area deeper than 3' shall be safety glazing. Windows in walls enclosing a stairway landing or within 60" of the top or bottom of an interior or exterior stair must be safety glazed. (USBC/IBC R308.4)		
Window Components (sash, sill, panes and trim)	N+	N
Door Replacement when not required to be fire rated	N+	N
§ single family homes, duplexes, townhouses and multifamily when serving a single dwelling unit	B	N
• all other uses		
Remove/ Install/Replace drywall on a fire or smoke rated assembly	B	N
<b>Note:</b> The ceiling of a garage located below a habitable room shall be protected with a minimum 5/8" type X gypsum board or equivalent (USBC/IRC R309)		
Replace Class C interior wall or ceiling finishes in Groups A, E and I	N	N
Remove/Install drywall or plaster on non fire or smoke rated assembly	N	N
Repair/Patch drywall or plaster on non fire or smoke rated assembly	N	N
Install carpets, floor coverings or interior floor finishes	N	N
<b>Note:</b> In over/under Townhomes, Duplexes and Multifamily Dwellings, sound transmission rating of 50 or greater is recommended for floor products.		
Install Insulation (ensure that attic eave vents are not blocked)	N	N
Repair or line closets	N	N
Panel interior walls without constructing any partitions or removing existing finish	N	N
Erect or remove partitions or non-load bearing walls	B	Y
Remove load bearing walls	B	Y
Finish Basement or Recreation Room	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Basements with Habitable spaces must have an emergency escape and rescue opening at least 5.7 sq ft in size. Tilt-out and removable sashes are		

permitted to achieve the opening size (USBC/IRC R310.1 & R310.1.1)		
Install Prefabricated Fireplace	B	Y
§ Install Gas Logs	M	Y
§ Install Prefab Chimney	M	Y
<b>Note:</b> Must submit a copy of the manufacturer=s literature and details of structure alteration with permit application		
Build masonry chimney for stove	B	Y
Build masonry fireplace	B	Y
Construct an entrance into existing basement	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Basements with Habitable spaces must have an emergency escape and rescue opening at least 5.7 sq ft in size. Tilt-out and removable sashes are permitted to achieve the opening size (USBC/IRC R310.1 & R310.1.1)		
Construct, dig or excavate a basement under existing dwelling	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Basements with Habitable spaces must have an emergency escape and rescue opening at least 5.7 sq ft in size. Tilt-out and removable sashes are permitted to achieve the opening size (USBC/IRC R310.1 & R310.1.1)		
Minor Porch Repairs / Flooring Replacement	N+	N
Build a concrete patio or stoop on grade	N	N
Build an above grade patio, stoop or deck	B	Y
Install patio or deck covers	B	Y
Build Gazebo or Portico	B	Y
Install non-retractable awnings or lattice work (canvas, wood, metal or plastic) over residential windows, patios, decks or walk-out areas	B	Y
Install retractable awnings	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Electrical permit may be required for motorized units		
Screen an existing roofed porch	N+	N
Enclose an existing porch or deck	B	Y
Enclose a carport	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> The ceiling of a garage located below a habitable room shall be protected with a minimum 5/8" type X gypsum board or equivalent. (USBC/IRC R309)		
Replace porch flooring	N	N
Repair steps using same materials and dimensions	N	N
Replace Exterior Steps (requires submission of plot plan showing location)	B	Y / GP
Install or Replace Handrail(s) on exterior steps	N	N
Install, Replace or Relocate interior stairs	B	Y
<b>Note:</b> Handrails shall have a height of 34" to 38" measured vertically from the nosing of the treads (USBC/IRC R311.5.6.1)		
Install attic pull-down stairs	B	Y
Build Dormer	B	Y
Lay a hardwood, asphalt tile, ceramic tile or linoleum floor on existing sub-floor	N	N

**Note:** In over/under Townhomes, Duplexes and Multifamily Dwellings, sound transmission rating (STC) of 50 or greater is recommended for floor products.

Install or Replace Cabinets in All Types of Uses N N

Pave existing driveway or walkway N N

**PLUMBING AND MECHANICAL PROJECTS**

**Note:** Any changes to the water supply and distribution systems, sanitary drainage systems, or vent systems requires a permit.

Install new sink, shower, toilet, tub, hot tub/spa in all uses P Y

Install sink, shower, toilet , tub, hot tub/spa where plumbing is roughed in for all uses P N

Repair leak in sink, shower, toilet, tub, hot tub/spa N N

Replace sink, shower, toilet, tub, hot tub/spa in same location N N

**Note:** Any changes to the Water Service, Sanitary or Vent System requires a permit

Replace water faucet N N

Install a garbage disposal E or P N

**Note:** Garbage Disposals must be properly grounded to avoid electric shock

Replace a garbage disposal \*\*

**Note:** Permit required for changes to electrical and/or plumbing supply. N N

Garbage Disposals must be properly grounded to avoid electric shock

Install or replace oil furnace M N

**Note:** Manual J Calculations Required at time of permit submission. Per USBC

' 103.9, upon replacement or new installation of any fuel burning appliance or equipment in an existing building, an inspection shall be conducted to ensure that the connected vent or chimney systems comply with the requirements for size (per IRC, IMC or IFGC) and that they are clean, free of any obstruction, blockages, defects or deterioration and are in operable condition. When not inspected by the building dept, certification of inspection is required.

Convert furnace from oil to gas or gas to oil M N

**Note:** Manual J Calculations Required at time of permit submission. Per USBC ' 103.9, upon replacement or new installation of any fuel burning appliance or equipment in an existing building, an inspection shall be conducted to ensure that the connected vent or chimney systems comply with the requirements for size (per IRC, IMC or IFGC) and that they are clean, free of any obstruction, blockages, defects or deterioration and are in operable condition. When not inspected by the building dept, certification of inspection is required.

Install Furnace Humidifier P/E M

**Note:** Permit required to add/extend water supply line or drainage

Replace Furnace Humidifier N N

**Note:** Permit required to add/extend water supply line or drainage

Install Gas Fireplace Logs M N

**Note:** Manufacturer Information Required for Permit

Replace Gas Fireplace Logs M N

**Note:** Manufacturer Information Required for Permit

Install or Replace a Water Heater

§ Gas or Oil Fueled	Y	N
§ Electric **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical or plumbing supply or drainage		
Repair a leak in outside underground water pipe	N	N
Repair a leak in a water pipe	N	N
Replace, extend or modify water pipe	P	N
Install or replace well water pump	N	N
Repair a leak in a gas pipe	N	N
Replace, extend or modify gas pipe	M	N
Install or replace a gas stove/oven	M	N
Install or replace gas clothes dryer	M/E	N
<b>Note:</b> In Historic Districts, new or relocated exterior venting may need BAR approval.		
Install a lawn sprinkler system	P	N
<b>Note:</b> backflow prevention device required		
Install a landscape water fountain/water fall	P	Y
<b>Note:</b> Method of water supply and discharge must be shown on plans		
Install a fish pond	P / M / E	Y
<b>Note:</b> Method of water supply and discharge must be shown on plans		
<b>ELECTRICAL PROJECTS</b>		
Replace 125 volt-15 or 20 ampere outlet with same type		
§ single family, townhouses, duplexes and multi-family where serving a single dwelling unit	N	N
§ all other uses	Y	N
Replace outlet covers	N	N
Replace ungrounded outlets with grounded type (3-prong, GFI or ARC fault)	E	N
Replace junction box covers	N	N
Replace electrical wiring	E	N
Relocate switches	E	N
Replace general use snap switches, dimmer and control switches		
§ single family, townhouses, duplexes and multi-family when serving a single dwelling unit	N	N
§ all other uses	Y	Y
Relocate outlets	E	N
Relocate lighting fixtures	E	N
Replace lighting fixtures with the same type and wattage		
§ single family townhouses, duplexes and multi-family when serving a single dwelling unit	N	N
§ all other uses	Y	N
Relocate Sub-Panels	E	Y

Relocate, change or upgrade services	E	N
Install new ceiling fans	E	N
Replace ceiling (paddle) fans		
§ Single Family, townhouses, duplexes and multifamily where serving a single dwelling unit	N	N
§ All other uses	Y	N
Install or Replace Smoke Detectors		
§ Hardwired Residential	E	N
§ Hardwired Non-Residential (see note)	FPS	Y
§ Low Voltage or Wireless	FPS	Y
§ Battery Operated	N	N
Note: Usually must tie into Fire Alarm System		
Replace Circuit Breakers		
§ Residential uses	N	N
§ Non-residential uses	Y	N
Replace Fuses	N	N
Install an electric stove/oven	E	N
Replace an electric stove/oven **	N	N
Note: Permit required for changes to electrical supply		
Install or Replace a Gas Stove/Oven	M	N
Install or Replace a Water Heater		
§ Gas or Oil Fueled	M	N
§ Electric**	N	N
Note: Permit required for changes to electrical or plumbing supply or drainage		
Install electric air conditioning	E	N
Note: Zoning requires a plot plan to show location of exterior condenser unit.		
Replace electric air conditioning **	N	N
Note: Zoning requires a survey to show location of exterior condenser unit and compliance with side and rear yard setbacks.		
Install an electric Furnace	E/M	N
Note: Manual J Calculations Required at time of permit		
Replace electric Furnace**	N	N
Install a garbage compactor	E	N
Replace a garbage compactor **	N	N
Note: Permit required for changes to electrical supply		
Install a heat pump	E	N
Replace a heat pump **	N	N
Note: Permit required for changes to electrical supply		

### APPLIANCE REPAIRS

Most appliance repairs do not require a permit unless there is a change to the fuel supply venting, drain and/or delivery piping - including change from hard/rigid piping to flexible piping/connectors. **Note:** In Historic Districts, new or relocated exterior venting for appliances may need BAR approval.

## APPLIANCE INSTALLATION AND REPLACEMENT

Install or Replace a Refrigerator without an ice-maker	N	N
Install a Refrigerator with an ice-maker	P	P
Replace a Refrigerator with an ice-maker **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to water supply or drainage		
Install a non-portable dishwasher	E or P	N
Replace a non-portable dishwasher **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical or plumbing supply		
Install a garbage disposal	E or P	N
<b>Note:</b> Garbage Disposals must be properly grounded to avoid electric shock		
Replace a garbage disposal **		
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical and/or plumbing supply. Garbage Disposals must be properly grounded to avoid electric shock	N	N
Install an electric stove/oven **	E	N
Replace an electric stove/oven **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical supply.		
Install or Replace a Gas stove/oven	M	N
Install or Replace a Water Heater		
§ Gas or Oil Fueled	M	N
§ Electric water heater**	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical or plumbing supply or drainage. In Historic Districts, new or relocated exterior venting may need BAR approval.		
Install or replace electric air conditioning	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Zoning requires a plot plan to show location of exterior condenser unit.		
Install a garbage compactor	E	N
Replace a garbage compactor **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical supply		
Install a heat pump	E	N
Replace a heat pump **	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical supply		
Install or replace washing machine		
§ Residential Uses	N	N
§ Non-Residential Uses - Including Laundry Rooms in Multifamily Condos or Rentals	P	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to water supply or drainage		
Install or replace electric clothes dryer		
§ Residential Uses	N	N
§ Non-Residential Uses - Including Laundry Rooms in Multifamily Condo or Rental	E/M	N
<b>Note:</b> Permits are required for changes in electrical service or duct work. In Historic Districts, new or relocated exterior venting may need BAR approval.		
Install or replace gas clothes dryer	M	N



**Note:** In Historic Districts, new or relocated exterior venting may need BAR approval.

Install portable heating appliance	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Keep portable heating devices clear of combustible materials. Portable heating device must not be left unattended in structures under construction.		
Install portable ventilating equipment (ie: floor or table top fans)	N	N
Install a sump pump and underslab drain - all uses	B & P	Y/GP
<b>Note:</b> An electrical permit may be required if an existing outlet is not present. See Alexandria Policy on Sump Pump Installation for drainage requirements		
Replace a sump pump in same location	N	GP
<b>Note:</b> See Alexandria Policy on Sump Pump Installation for drainage requirements		
Install portable cooling or air conditioning unit	N	N
Install electric air cleaner	E or M	N
Replace electric air cleaner	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical service		
Install attic fan	E	N
Replace an attic fan	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Permit required for changes to electrical service		
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>		
Asbestos removal [USBC108.1(3)]	B	N
<b>Note:</b> Approval from Environmental Quality is required.		
Demolish buildings not connected to public sewer	D	GP
<b>Note:</b> Site Plan required by Section 1092 of USBC		
Demolish buildings connected to public sewer	D & P	GP
Any Interior or Exterior Demolition prior to obtaining a Construction Permit	B	Y
Install Underground Tanks	M	Y
Remove Underground Tanks	D	GP
Install or Remove Aboveground Tanks	FPP	N
Install or Replace Permanent Signs +	S/E	Y
<b>Note:</b> Dimensions of sign, color detail and method of attachment must be shown on Plans. Separate Electric permit required for lighted signs.		
Non-Permanent Signs or Banners + (ie: yard sale, grand openings, clearance/closeout Sales political signs, rental banners, etc).	N	N
<b>Note:</b> Must have Zoning Approval prior to erection/installation		

**FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

**Note:** Fire Communications 703.838.4660 **must** be notified when system is taken off line **and** put back in service. Failing to do so may result in a penalty of up to 1 year in prison and/or a fine up to \$2,500, upon

conviction. Fire alarm and sprinkler work must be inspected at rough-in stage and before concealment on the issued FPS permit. This inspection is separate from the electrical rough-in.

Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate a commercial or residential fire sprinkler system	FPS	Y
Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate a fire suppression system	FPS	Y
Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate a fire alarm/detection system	FPS	Y
Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate a fire service main or fire hydrant	FPS	Y
Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate access control devices	FPS	Y
Install, alter, extend, repair or relocate smoke control or removal system	FPS	Y
Install, replace, repair or relocate low-voltage or wireless smoke detectors	FPS	Y
Install or replace battery operated smoke detectors	N	N

+ Structures in the Old and Historic and Parker-Gray districts may require BAR approval (703.746.4666) Permits are required per City Code 8-1-22 for replacement of windows, siding and roofing material.

\*\*Exact replacement of this appliance does not require a permit. Exact replacement is defined as no change in size or location ***and*** no extension, modification or replacement of ductwork, piping, venting, electrical circuits or wiring. In the Old and Historic and Parker-Gray districts, all exterior replacement work visible from the public-right-of way (including venting) must have BAR approval. City Code Section 8-11-22 requires permits for the replacement of siding, roofing and windows in designated BAR districts. Zoning approval is required for stoves, ovens or sinks installed in basements, garages or other locations not previously approved as the primary kitchen for property.