

**160D-1110**

**NC Building**

**Permit**

**Requirements**

# NC Permitting Requirements

## Background on NC Code and Recent Statute Changes

In 1957 the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation creating the *Building Code Council*, which was charged with preparing and adopting a *North Carolina State Building Code*. The General Assembly specified what the Code should/could contain, what is exempt and when permits were required under NC G.S. §143-138 (25 pages).

Contents of the code indicated in G.S. 143-138:

*The North Carolina State Building Code, as adopted by the Building Code Council, may include reasonable and suitable classifications of buildings and structures, both as to use and occupancy; general building restrictions as to location, height, and floor areas; rules for the lighting and ventilation of buildings and structures; requirements concerning means of egress from buildings and structures; requirements concerning means of ingress in buildings and structures; rules governing construction and precautions to be taken during construction; rules as to permissible materials, loads, and stresses; rules governing chimneys, heating appliances, elevators, and other facilities connected with the buildings and structures; rules governing plumbing, heating, air conditioning for the purpose of comfort cooling by the lowering of temperature, and electrical systems; and such other reasonable rules pertaining to the construction of buildings and structures and the installation of particular facilities therein as may be found reasonably necessary for the protection of the occupants of the building or structure, its neighbors, and members of the public at large.*

The enforcement of the Codes was vested in the Division of Engineering of the North Carolina Department of Insurance, who has these responsibilities *in conjunction and cooperation with* local certified inspection officials. In 1977 the General Assembly decided to *impose on counties and cities the primary obligation to perform inspections to ensure compliance with applicable building codes through the permitting of projects*. Counties/cities could perform this duty either by creating their own inspection department or creating a joint inspection department with a city or another county or contracting with another county/city to provide inspection services to the requesting county/city. The same legislation also created the *North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board* that was charged with regulating individuals who would be hired by local inspection departments to conduct these Code enforcement inspections. [G.S. Chapter 143, Article 9C.] Since 1985 at the latest, all counties and cities have had the primary responsibility for ensuring enforcement of State and local building code provisions either through their own Inspection Department or in conjunction with another local governmental unit. There are 100 counties in North Carolina and there are 1,041 county subdivisions which are known as minor civil divisions (MCDs). There are 1,035 townships which are nonfunctioning nongovernmental entities. Census designated places total 739 of these there are 553 incorporated areas consisting of 76 cities, 456 towns and 21 villages per most recent census data.

The enforcement of codes was also under section 160A for a City and 153A for Counties and in 2020 all the development regulations found in NC General Statutes changed and was moved including permitting requirement to consolidate under one statute 160D. The requirements for permits can also now be found in NC G.S. 160D-1110.

## NC REQUIREMENTS

### **160D-1110. Building permits.**

**Req. (a)** (a) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, no person shall commence or proceed with any of the following without first securing all permits required by the State Building Code and any other State or local laws applicable to any of the following activities:

**Building** (1) The construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, movement to another site, removal, or demolition of any building or structure.

**Plumbing** (2) The installation, extension, or general repair of any plumbing system except that in any one- or two-family dwelling unit a permit is not required for the connection of a water heater that is being replaced if (i) the work is performed by a person licensed under G.S. 87-21 who personally examines the work at completion and ensures that a leak test has been performed on the gas piping, and (ii) the energy use rate or thermal input is not greater than that of the water heater that is being replaced, there is no change in fuel, energy source, location, capacity, or routing or sizing of venting and piping, and the replacement is installed in accordance with the current edition of the State Building Code.

**HVAC** (3) The installation, extension, alteration, or general repair of any heating or cooling equipment system.

**Electrical** (4) The installation, extension, alteration, or general repair of any electrical wiring, devices, appliances, or equipment, except that in any one- or two-family dwelling unit a permit is not required for repair or replacement of electrical lighting fixtures or devices, such as receptacles and lighting switches, or for the connection of an existing branch circuit to an electric water heater that is being replaced if all of the following requirements are met:

- a. With respect to electric water heaters, the replacement water heater is placed in the same location and is of the same or less capacity and electrical rating as the original.
- b. With respect to electrical lighting fixtures and devices, the replacement is with a fixture or device having the same voltage and the same or less amperage.
- c. The work is performed by a person licensed under G.S. 87-43.
- d. The repair or replacement installation meets the current edition of the State Building Code, including the State Electrical Code.

However, a building permit is not required for the installation, maintenance, or replacement of any load control device or equipment by an electric power supplier, as defined in G.S. 62-133.8, or an electrical contractor contracted by the electric power supplier, so long as the work is subject to supervision by an electrical contractor licensed under Article 4 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes. The electric power supplier shall provide such installation, maintenance, or replacement in accordance with (i) an activity or program ordered, authorized, or approved by the North Carolina Utilities Commission pursuant to G.S. 62-133.8 or G.S. 62-133.9 or (ii) a similar program undertaken by a municipal electric service provider, whether the installation, modification, or replacement is made before or after the point of delivery of electric service to the customer. The exemption under this subsection applies to all existing installations.

**Application (b)** (b) A building permit shall be in writing and shall contain a provision that the work done shall comply with the North Carolina State Building Code and all other applicable State and local laws. Nothing in this section requires a local government to review and approve residential building plans submitted to the local government pursuant to the North Carolina Residential

Code, provided that the local government may review and approve the residential building plans as it deems necessary. If a local government chooses to review residential building plans for any structures subject to regulation under the North Carolina Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings, all initial reviews for the building permit must be performed within 15 business days of submission of the plans. A local government shall not require residential building plans for one- and two-family dwellings to be sealed by a licensed engineer or licensed architect unless required by the North Carolina State Building Code. No building permits shall be issued unless the plans and specifications are identified by the name and address of the author thereof, and, if the General Statutes of North Carolina require that plans for certain types of work be prepared only by a licensed architect or licensed engineer, no building permit shall be issued unless the plans and specifications bear the North Carolina seal of a licensed architect or of a licensed engineer. When any provision of the General Statutes of North Carolina or of any ordinance or development or zoning regulation requires that work be done by a licensed specialty contractor of any kind, no building permit for the work shall be issued unless the work is to be performed by such a duly licensed contractor.

Exceptions  
(c)

(c) No permit issued under Article 9 or 9C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is required for any construction, installation, repair, replacement, or alteration performed in accordance with the current edition of the North Carolina State Building Code costing ~~fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000)~~ **twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000)** or less in any single-family residence, farm building, **or commercial building** unless the work involves any of the following:

- (1) The addition, repair, or replacement of load-bearing structures. However, no permit is required for replacement of windows, doors, exterior siding, or the pickets, railings, stair treads, and decking of porches and exterior ~~decks~~. **decks that otherwise meet the requirements of this subsection.**
- (2) The addition or change in the design of plumbing. However, no permit is required for replacements otherwise meeting the requirements of this subsection that do not change size or capacity.
- (3) The addition, replacement, or change in the design of heating, air-conditioning, or electrical wiring, devices, appliances, or equipment, other than like-kind replacement of electrical devices and lighting fixtures. Senate Bill 329 Session Law 2021-192 Page 3
- (4) The use of materials not permitted by the North Carolina **Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings**. State Building Code.
- (5) The addition (excluding replacement) of roofing.
- (6) **Any changes to which the North Carolina Fire Prevention Code applies.**

Permit  
special cost  
(d)

(d) A local government shall not require more than one building permit for the complete installation or replacement of any natural gas, propane gas, or electrical appliance on an existing structure when the installation or replacement is performed by a person licensed under G.S. 87-21 or G.S. 87-43. The cost of the building permit for such work shall not exceed the cost of any one individual trade permit issued by that local government, nor shall the local government increase the costs of any fees to offset the loss of revenue caused by this provision.

Land  
(e)

(e) No building permit shall be issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section for any land-disturbing activity, as defined in G.S. 113A-52(6), or for any activity covered by G.S. 113A-57, unless an erosion and sedimentation control plan for the site of the activity or a tract of land including the site of the activity has been approved under the Sedimentation Pollution Control Act.

Land  
(f)

(f) No building permit shall be issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section for any land-disturbing activity that is subject to, but does not comply with, the requirements of G.S. 113A-71.

Homeowner  
(g)

(g) No building permit shall be issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section where the cost of the work is thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) or more, other than for improvements to an existing single-family residential dwelling unit as defined in G.S. 87-15.5(7) that the owner occupies as a residence, or for the addition of an accessory building or accessory structure as defined in the North Carolina Uniform Residential Building Code, the use of which is incidental to that residential dwelling unit, unless the name, physical and mailing address, telephone number, facsimile number, and electronic mail address of the lien agent designated by the owner pursuant to G.S. 44A-11.1(a) is conspicuously set forth in the permit or in an attachment thereto. The building permit may contain the lien agent's electronic mail address. The lien agent information for each permit issued pursuant to this subsection shall be maintained by the inspection department in the same manner and in the same location in which it maintains its record of building permits issued. Where the improvements to a real property leasehold are limited to the purchase, transportation, and setup of a manufactured home, as defined in G.S. 143-143.9(6), the purchase price of the manufactured home shall be excluded in determining whether the cost of the work is thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) or more.

C.O.  
(h)

(h) No local government may withhold a building permit or certificate of occupancy that otherwise would be eligible to be issued under this section to compel, with respect to another property or parcel, completion of work for a separate permit or compliance with land-use regulations under this Chapter unless otherwise authorized by law or unless the local government reasonably determines the existence of a public safety issue directly related to the issuance of a building permit or certificate of occupancy.

Violation  
(i)

(i) Violation of this section constitutes a Class 1 misdemeanor. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, ss. 30, 51(a), (b), (d).)

### **§ 160D-1111. Expiration of building permits.**

A building permit issued pursuant to this Article shall expire by limitation six months, or any lesser time fixed by ordinance of the city council, after the date of issuance if the work authorized by the permit has not been commenced. If, after commencement, the work is discontinued for a period of 12 months, the permit therefor shall immediately expire. No work authorized by any building permit that has expired shall thereafter be performed until a new permit has been secured. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, s. 51(a), (b), (d).)

### **§ 160D-1112. Changes in work.**

After a building permit has been issued, no changes or deviations from the terms of the application, plans and specifications, or the permit, except where changes or deviations are clearly permissible under the State Building Code, shall be made until specific written approval of proposed changes or deviations has been obtained from the inspection department. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, s. 51(a), (b), (d).)

**§ 160D-1113. Inspections of work in progress.**

Subject to the limitation imposed by G.S. 160D-1104(d), as the work pursuant to a building permit progresses, local inspectors shall make as many inspections thereof as may be necessary to satisfy them that the work is being done according to the provisions of any applicable State and local laws and of the terms of the permit. In exercising this power, members of the inspection department have a right to enter on any premises within the jurisdiction of the department at all reasonable hours for the purposes of inspection or other enforcement action, upon presentation of proper credentials. **If a building permit has been obtained by an owner exempt from licensure under G.S. 87-1(b)(2), no inspection shall be conducted without the owner being present,** unless the plans for the building were drawn and sealed by an architect licensed pursuant to Chapter 83A of the General Statutes. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, ss. 31, 51(a), (b), (d).)

**The changes indicated in section (c) of the permitting requirements was signed into law on December 9<sup>th</sup> of 2021.**