

SECTION 1

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS

The mission statement of the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) is to serve the people of Sonoma County by providing a customer-focused process for the orderly development of real property, balanced with resource stewardship under the general policy direction of the Board of Supervisors, and to develop and maintain standards that protect the health and safety of the public.

This Residential Construction Handbook was compiled to assist the public in the permitting process and provide as much technical information as possible in one reference manual. The Permit and Resource Management Department has worked diligently on the Residential Construction Handbook striving to maintain the goals set forth in our mission statement. We believe that the Residential Construction Handbook provides the public with valuable information and assistance. This edition is published to incorporate the 2010 California Building Codes.

Permits Required

1. **Building Permit:** Unless otherwise exempt (see Work Exempt from Building Permits below), a building permit is required to construct, alter, enlarge, repair, move, improve, convert or demolish a building or structure. In addition to a building permit, plumbing, mechanical and electrical permits may also be required. Call (707) 565-2095 for building permit related questions.
2. **Grading Permit and Drainage Review:** A grading permit and drainage review may be required depending upon the location of the project and scope of work. Form GRD-002, Grading Permit Questionnaire, will assist in determining if a grading permit is required. Grading and drainage plans which depict original grade contours, finished grade contours and drainage configuration and devices must be submitted for a grading permit. See Section 6 for more detailed information. Call (707) 565-2268 for grading permit and drainage review questions.
3. **Site Evaluation:** A site evaluation is conducted by PRMD staff prior to building or grading plan review to determine site conditions that could affect a proposed new building, additions to buildings and grading. Site conditions that may require further review and/or affect the design of the proposed building or grading project include, but are not limited to, flood zones, steep slopes, slides, soft, liquefiable, or expansive soils, overhead power lines, wind exposure, seismic design categories, and areas of poor drainage. After the site evaluation is conducted, PRMD will determine whether additional reports or studies are required. Applications for site evaluations may be submitted prior to finalizing the design of the proposed building or grading plan. A complete site plan is required for all site evaluation applications (See Form CNI-002, Site Evaluation Procedures for Building and Grading Permits for more detail). The building site location must be staked and the site address must be posted or displayed at the road, visible from both directions. Application fees are paid at the time of application or when the building or grading plans are submitted. Additional fees may be charged if the inspector is unable to locate the site or staked area of the project. Call (707) 565-2095 for questions related to site evaluations.
4. **Temporary Electric, Gas and Occupancy:** With inspector approval, temporary electric for construction purposes and temporary electric meter or gas is allowed when a building permit is issued. A separate permit is not required, unless the building permit has not yet been

issued. A temporary occupancy permit and additional fee is required for occupancy of a building prior to final. All PRMD required approvals must be issued. Call (707) 565-2095 for questions related to temporary electric, gas and occupancy.

5. **Septic Permit:** If public sewer is not available for the property proposed for development, the installation of a private sewage disposal system (septic system) is required. Prior to septic permit application, a pre-perc evaluation, soils test, and percolation test must be performed by a septic consultant and confirmed by PRMD Well and Septic staff. In addition, a groundwater determination (a test conducted during the rainy season at a specific time period) may be required. If these tests are approved, a septic permit application can be submitted to PRMD.

Other than minor repairs, such as replacement of roofing or siding, a septic clearance is required for alteration or modification of any structure connected to a septic system. Contact the PRMD Well & Septic Section staff at (707) 565-2849 to discuss septic requirements prior to building plan preparation and prior to commencing any work, or any other septic related questions.

6. **Well Permit:** Well permits are required to drill, abandon, or deepen wells and can only be issued to C-57 Well Drilling Contractors. Call (707) 565-2849 for well permit questions
7. **Sewer Permit:** A sanitary sewer inspection permit is required for any sewer work performed, including but not limited to, connection to a house, a commercial building, or apartments. The work must be inspected and approved before occupancy, and/or use of the sewer is allowed. Call (707) 565-2268 for sewer permit related questions.
8. **Planning Permit:** Planning permits such as design review, use permits, zoning permits and coastal permits may be required prior to the issuance of a building permit. Zoning clearances are required for building permits issued for new buildings, structures, or additions to existing buildings or structures. There may be additional setback requirements for a building depending upon the location near a scenic roadway or waterway. Additional review, such as administrative design review, may be required prior to the issuance of a building permit. Contact a planner at the PRMD Zoning Cubicle to discuss zoning regulations prior to preparing building plans or call (707) 565-1900 and ask to speak with a planner for planning permit related questions and zoning information.
9. **Encroachment Permit:** Building permits for new buildings and additions to existing buildings must be reviewed by the PRMD Engineering Section to determine if an encroachment permit is required. Work within the County maintained road or right-of-way, such as upgrading or paving a driveway, installing utilities, drainage, landscaping and mailbox structures, requires an encroachment permit. Call (707) 565-2268 for encroachment permit related questions.
10. **Agricultural Building Permit Exemption:** A request for an agricultural building permit exemption may be submitted to PRMD for a building designed and constructed for use in housing farm machinery, animals, supplies or products that are harvested from or utilized on parcels of land consisting of five (5) acres or more. Although the agricultural building does not need a building permit, the design and construction of the agricultural building must comply with the building code requirements. This exemption is permitted in certain zoning districts where an agricultural use has been established on the property. See the following policy for more detailed information [Agricultural Permit Exemption Policy 4-0-5](#) or Call (707) 565-2095 for agricultural building permit exemption questions.

11. **Flood Elevation Certificate:** The habitable finished floor level of a new or substantially improved residence, which is located within the limits of a 100 year flood zone, must be located at least one foot above the determined Base Flood Elevation (B.F.E. - 100 year flood level). A Flood Elevation Certificate is required and the finished floor elevations must be verified by PRMD inspection staff. Call (707) 565- 2268 for questions related to flood elevation certificates. A Residential Construction Guidelines and Limitations handout is available from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).
12. **Demolition Permit:** A demolition permit is required to demolish a building or structure. The demolition permit will specify the type and size of building which is necessary to receive potential credit for some development fees. In addition, there are asbestos notification requirements for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) or the Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District that must be met prior to issuance of a demolition permit. Notification forms are available at PRMD or through BAAQMD at (415)-749-4762 or Sonoma County Air Pollution District at (707) 433-5911. If the structure is connected to a septic system, the septic tank may need to be properly destroyed under a separate permit. Call (707) 565-2095 with demolition permit related questions.

Work Exempt from Building Permits

The following is a list of work that may be performed without a building permit. If your project does not appear on this list of exempt work, you should assume that a building permit is required.

Note: Although some work is exempt from a building permit, additional permits or review may be required. Before a building or structure is erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, improved, removed, converted or demolished, it is important to contact the appropriate staff at the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) to determine if any other permit or technical review is required.

Although work may be exempt from a building permit, it may be subject to other county regulations (Well and Septic, Zoning, Drainage, Sewer, etc.). Although a building permit is not required, the exempt construction/work must be code compliant. For example, re-striping a commercial parking lot is exempt from a building permit, however, the striping must conform to building code standards for accessibility and Zoning standards for parking lot design. Failure to comply with code requirements may constitute a violation.

Building:

1. **Accessory Structures:**
One-story detached accessory structures used as tool or storage sheds, playhouses or similar uses when located on a parcel which contains an existing single family dwelling or other permitted primary use or structure. Such structures shall not have a floor area that exceeds 120 square feet and the height above grade shall not exceed 12 feet. No more than one structure may be allowed under this exemption unless separated from another permit exempt structure by more than 50 feet.

Note: Electrical, plumbing, or mechanical work in connection with such structures requires an electrical, plumbing or mechanical permit even though a building permit is not required for the structure itself.

2. **Prefabricated Structures:**
Prefabricated structures not more than 500 square feet in area, constructed of light frame materials and covered with cloth or flexible plastic, accessory to a single family dwelling, with no associated electrical, plumbing, or mechanical work and the height above existing grade does not exceed 12 feet.
3. **Children's Play Structures:**
Tree houses, skateboard ramps and children's play structures (i.e. jungle gyms) when constructed on a parcel which contains a single family dwelling and not used for commercial purposes. Such structures require a building permit if the Building Official finds that the structure poses a hazard to health or safety.
4. **Interior Finish Work:**
Painting, interior papering, carpeting, cabinets, tiling and similar finish work.
5. **Replacement In-Kind:**
Replacement of windows and doors with others of the same size, and in the same location when the structural frame of the opening is not altered.
6. **Fences:**
Open fences, such as wood lattice or wire mesh, ten (10) feet or less in height do not require a building permit. Solid wood, concrete and masonry fences six (6) feet or less in height do not require a building permit. Solid fences exceeding six (6) feet in height topped with up to four (4) feet of open fence as measured from the lowest grade to the top of the fence do not require a building permit.

Note: While a fence may be exempt from a building permit, other permits or approvals may be required, such as, but not limited to, use permits, design review, and/or coastal permits. In general, fences over (3) three feet in height within the front yard setback, or over six (6) feet in height within the rear and side yard setbacks are likely to require a use permit, despite the exemption from a building permit. If your fence exceeds these limits, contact the Permit and Resource Management Department planning staff to determine if permits other than a building permit are required. A site plan showing the location of the proposed fence is required to make these determinations.
7. **Retaining Walls:**
Retaining walls, which retain not more than 3 feet of material unless supporting a surcharge or impounding class I, II, IIIA liquids. For the purpose of this section, a retaining wall is considered to be supporting a surcharge if:
 - a. The wall retains more than one foot of material and the retained material slopes more than two units horizontal to one vertical within a distance equal to twice the height of the wall above the lowest existing grade.
 - b. The wall retains more than one foot of material and any road or structure is located on the retaining material within a distance equal to twice the height of the wall above the lowest existing grade.
8. **Other Features:**
Platforms, walks, non-structural slabs, paving or seal coats on private property not in the county right of way, and decks not more than 200 square feet in area, not more than thirty (30) inches above grade (measured to the lowest adjacent grade within 3 feet from the edge of the walking surface), not attached to a dwelling unit, not serving the required exit door, and

not over any basement or story below.

9. **Movable/Temporary Items:**

- a. Nonfixed and movable cases, racks, counters, and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches high (for commercial occupancies) and temporary motion picture, television and theater stage, seats and scenery.
- b. Membrane structures (i.e. tents and awnings) erected for less than 180 days in any twelve month period.

10 **Shading Devices:**

- a. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall of a residence or residential garage which does not project more than 54 inches.
- b. Detached shade structures (i.e. trellises, arbor or gazebo) when the height above grade does not exceed 12 feet. For the purpose of this section trellises, arbors and gazebos are defined as follows:
 - (1) Structures which have a lattice or fabric roof structure.
 - (2) 75% of the exterior walls are not less than 75% open.
 - (3) A structure which a motor vehicle cannot be driven in due to the configuration of the structure or placement on the site.
 - (4) electrical, plumbing or mechanical equipment contained within the structure shall require a permit.
 - (5) Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agriculture purposes, not including service systems. (Plumbing, electrical or mechanical systems associated with the structure require permits.)

11. **Prefabricated Swimming Pools:**

Prefabricated pools accessory to a single family dwelling, which do not exceed 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.

12. **Tanks:**

Tanks, not containing class I, II, IIIA liquids whether underground or supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.

Note: Must check with PRMD Fire Inspection staff regarding regulations for water or fuel storage tanks and PRMD zoning staff for required setbacks from property lines.

13. **State Owned Building under the Jurisdiction of the State Fire Marshal.**

14. **Oil Derricks.**

15. **Minor Repair:**

- a. Minor repair of interior paneling or gypsum wallboard when it does not serve as a fire resistive assembly or as lateral bracing for a structure. Such repair is limited to 500 square feet; additional work in excess of 500 square feet requires a permit. This exemption shall not apply to structures subject to flood damage.
- b. Removal of up to 25% of exterior and/or interior coverings on walls or roofs or similar work for the purpose of determining the condition of structural members in a structure where work is being planned. Such work may remain exposed for a maximum of 90 days before being repaired. A permit must be obtained for the repairs unless exempted by the Sonoma County Code.

Electrical:

1. Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
2. Electrical equipment used for radio and television transmissions.
3. Installation of temporary systems required for the testing or servicing of electrical equipment or apparatus.
4. Listed cord and plug connected temporary decorative lighting.
5. Reinstallation or replacement of attachment plug receptacles, but not the outlets.
6. Repair or replacement of branch circuits or overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location.
7. Installation or maintenance of communications wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus or equipment.

Gas:

1. Portable heating appliances and the replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliances, portable ventilation equipment, portable cooling units, and portable evaporative coolers.
2. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code. Self-contained refrigeration system containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant and actuated by motors of 1 horsepower or less.
3. The replacement of any part that does not alter the equipment's approval or make it unsafe.

Plumbing:

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

The Permit Application Process

Building permits for a new house, addition/remodel to an existing house, a new garage or other new residential accessory building(s) are issued by PRMD for any property located within the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County (outside the city limits of the nine cities). If the property is located within a city, the appropriate city building or planning department should be contacted for assistance.

Building permits may be issued to the owner of the property, a California licensed contractor, architect or engineer, or agent of the property owner who has a signed letter of authorization from the property owner. Building permits for minor work, such as a re-roof, new water heater, electric upgrade or other work that does not involve any structural modification, can be issued over the counter. For building contractors, these permits are also available online. Building permits for new additions, extensive remodeling and new buildings require construction plans and plan review. This manual provides information to help guide applicants through the building permit process for those projects that require construction plans.

The building permit process involves a number of steps that are required to ensure compliance with a

variety of development regulations. Some regulations may significantly impact the design, location or feasibility of a new building, or addition/remodel of an existing building. Therefore, it is very important to understand the applicable regulations in advance of designing building plans.

1. **Gather information before designing building plans.** Bring the Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) or street address to PRMD and consult with staff in advance of designing building plans.

- a. **Zoning.** A planner will identify the zoning of the property and explain the applicable zoning regulations such as required setbacks from property lines, building envelopes, building height, parking standards and if a zoning permit or other review is required.
- b. **Building.** A building inspector or building plans examiner will answer questions about building codes, building plan requirements, and determine if a site evaluation is required. (See Site Evaluation below).
- c. **Public Sewer and Road Encroachment.** If the property is served by a public sewer system, (not a private septic system) engineering staff will determine if the system is within the County sewer system or a city sewer system, and whether a utility certificate is required. A utility certificate is issued by the applicable city and must be submitted prior to the issuance of a building permit. The applicant will also be advised of the amount of sewer fees that must be paid prior to the issuance of a building permit.

All work in the County road-right-of-way, such as paving a driveway entrance where it connects to a public road, requires an encroachment permit issued by PRMD. Engineering staff will determine if an encroachment permit is required.

- d. **Well and Septic.** If the property is served by a private sewage disposal system (septic system), a registered environmental health specialist will explain the septic regulations that will affect the design, location and feasibility of your project.

Depending upon the scope of work, an addition/remodel to an existing residential structure may significantly impact the septic system. Therefore, upgrades to residential structures may require varying levels of upgrade to the septic system. In many cases, the extent of remodeling may be limited by the classification of the existing septic system. *See PRMD Policy and Procedure 9-2-12, Guidelines for Remodeling and Additions with Respect to Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems.*

- e. **Fire.** A fire inspector will explain fire safe standards which may require that an existing or proposed driveway be widened, extended or paved or that an on-site water storage tank be installed. All new houses in Sonoma County require the installation of fire sprinklers. A separate permit is required for fire sprinklers.
- f. **Pre-Application Conference.** A Pre-Application Conference is available to assist customers with both minor and more complex building projects, whether commercial or residential. This process allows for a preliminary review of the proposed project by PRMD and other relevant County Department staff in a meeting format with the applicant and the applicant's representative(s). The

applicant is able to ask questions of staff and receive information early on with respect to a project. Participation in a Pre-application Conference can significantly streamline the permitting process. There are separate fees for this service. Call (707) 565-1900 for more information.

2. **Consider applying for a building site evaluation prior to finalizing the design of the proposed new building or addition to an existing building.** A building site evaluation is required for all new buildings and additions to existing buildings. To minimize delays, it is often better to complete the site evaluation process before submitting building plans. The purpose of the building site evaluation is to determine if there are site conditions that need further review. These site conditions include, but are not limited to, flood zones, steep slopes, slides, soft or expansive soils, overhead power lines, wind exposure, seismic design categories and areas of poor drainage. The review is conducted by a PRMD building inspector in advance of the building plan review process. An application for a building site evaluation is not required to be submitted in advance of submitting building plans; however, depending upon the scope of work and location of the building, it may be important to review the results of the site evaluation before designing the building or addition.

It is very important to follow the procedures for a building site evaluation (see form CNI-002). The building inspector must be able to locate the property and the area on the property where the new building or addition to existing building will be constructed. Therefore, the address must be posted at the road, visible from both directions, at any forks in the road and at the site. The area of proposed new construction must be staked out. If the building inspector cannot locate the property and the area of new construction, an additional fee will be charged for the inspector to re-visit the property and the building project may be delayed. After the site evaluation is completed, the building inspector will determine whether additional reports or studies are required (i.e., a soils investigation) and the applicant will be notified of the results in writing. The building site evaluation is valid for one year.

3. **Prepare the site and building plans for the proposed building or addition.** It may not be necessary to hire a professional to design and draw building plans. However, the plan preparer shall be familiar with building codes, county regulations, and the preparation of house plans (see form BPC-002 for a checklist of required items to be included in the proposed building plans and construction documents.) Plans must be prepared to an architectural standard and be drawn to a common, commercially available scale (i.e. 1/4"=1'). The Building Plans Examiner may require that a licensed professional be obtained to assist in the preparation of building plans and construction documents.
4. **Submit the application for a building permit.** Applications for building permits that require plans are accepted Monday through Thursday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The application package must be complete or it will not be accepted. The following materials must be included:
 - a. The completed building permit application (see form CIS-007) signed by either the property owner of record, a licensed building contractor or other licensed professional. PRMD staff will verify that a contractor has a valid license and proof of insurance prior to issuing a building permit to a contractor. Other individuals may submit the application on behalf of the property owner if a letter of authorization signed by the property owner is attached.

- b. Four (4) **Complete** sets of building plans that must include the following:
- Site plan (see form CSS-019 Standard Site Plan) **NOTE:** Must include contours
 - Floor plan (electrical, plumbing and mechanical)
 - Foundation plan (footing details)
 - Elevations
 - Framing plan
 - Cross sections
 - Structural details
 - Signature of plan preparer (sheets prepared by licensed Architect or Engineer shall include the applicable stamp and signature.)

Two (2) sets of the following:

- Title 24 energy calculations (signed)
- Engineering calculations (if engineered) (signed and stamped)
- Geotechnical report (if required) (signed and stamped)
- CalGreen residential checklist (if required)

- c. Other items that may be required:

- Geotechnical foundation approval letter
- Truss calculations and layout (2 signed, stamped sets)
- Flood elevation certificate
- Letter of authorization
- Installation Manuals (2 sets for manufactured homes)
- Special inspection form
- Percentage of Remodel Improvement Determination Worksheet (WLS-029)

5. **Complete the Grading Permit Questionnaire.** The applicant will be required to complete a questionnaire (Form GRD-002) and meet with engineering staff to assist you in determining if a separate grading permit is required. That determination is based in part on the amount of grading work required for the proposed new building or addition. If a grading permit is required, grading plans and supporting documentation shall be submitted for review. This is an important step in this process because the building permit cannot be issued until the required grading permit is issued. If a grading permit is not required, engineering staff will discuss any potential drainage issues that may exist.

6. **Meet with a permit technician to start the building permit application.** A permit technician will review the application materials to verify that the submittal package is complete. If the submittal package is complete, the permit technician will initiate the building permit process by assigning a building permit number and verifying the address. Often times, a new address or an address correction is necessary. The address assignment or address correction will be accomplished in conjunction with the permit process.

In addition to building plan check by the PRMD building plan check section, building plans must be reviewed by other PRMD divisions such as zoning, well and septic, fire, and engineering. The permit technician will provide a checklist of the PRMD divisions that must review the plans and approve issuance of the building permit. The technical staff representing each of these divisions will review the building plans with the applicant and discuss any requirements that may need to be completed prior to the issuance of a building permit. The applicant may receive the required approval(s) on the same day or be advised of the additional requirements or plan

revisions required for a particular approval. For example, the applicant may be advised to complete work necessary to obtain a septic permit before receiving septic approval on an associated building permit. The failure to meet with staff at each of the required cubicle stations may result in delays, additional costs, or necessitate the redesign of the proposed project.

The applicant will be provided an estimate of all fees required for the building permit. These fees include building plan check, permit, traffic, park, affordable housing and school fees. (See Estimated Permit Fee Handout - Form CSS-002a). All fees, except school fees, are paid directly to PRMD. School fees are paid to the applicable school district. A school fee form will be given to the applicant to take to the school district where school fees are to be paid. The applicant will need to provide a receipt verifying payment before a building permit can be issued. After meeting with staff at each of the cubicle stations on the checklist, the applicant will be directed to the cashier for the payment of building plan review fees. The remaining balance is paid when the building permit is issued.

7. **Site evaluation and plan review.** Unless a building site evaluation was completed in advance of submitting building plans, (See number 2 above), a PRMD building inspector will conduct a site evaluation of the property within approximately 15 days. After the building site evaluation has been completed, a PRMD building plans examiner will begin the building plan review process. During the course of the building plan review, the applicant will be advised in writing of any necessary corrections or “redlines” that need to be made. It is the responsibility of the applicant, or the design professional, to respond adequately to any notice of corrections so that the building plan review process is not delayed. After the building plan review process, the plans will be routed back to a permit technician and the applicant will be contacted in regard to issuing the building permit.

NOTE: A building permit application package is valid for one (1) year. If the building permit is not issued within that one year time period, the permit application will expire. An expired building permit application can be renewed one time for a cost of 25% of the plan review fees. The renewed building permit application is valid for one year from the date of renewal.

8. **Issuance of the building permit.** After building plan review, a permit technician will review the application and building plans to verify that all required PRMD approvals have been issued (e.g. Well & Septic, Zoning, etc.). If there are any outstanding approvals, the permit technician will work with the applicant and PRMD staff to facilitate the issuance of those approvals. A permit technician will contact the applicant by telephone to inform the applicant that the building permit is ready to be issued, or what approvals are still required to get the building permit issued. The applicant will also be reminded to bring the verification of payment of school fees. When the applicant returns to PRMD for the building permit, an invoice will be given listing each of the required building permit and development fees left to be paid and directed to the cashier for payment. Permit fees may be paid by check or credit card. After payment of fees, the applicant will be given one set of building plans to be kept at the job site for use by the PRMD building inspector, a field inspection record card and instructions detailing PRMD’s automated inspection system.
9. **Complete the work in stages and call for inspections.** All work must be inspected by PRMD throughout the course of construction (see form CNI-004). The responsible party must be sure to call for an inspection before concealing any work, (e. g., call for inspection prior to pouring concrete for the foundation.) If the building inspector identifies work that needs to be corrected, a “correction notice” detailing the corrections that need to be done will be issued. After the corrections are made, an inspection shall be completed so that the corrected work can be

verified. Building permits are valid for three (3) years from the date of issuance. If the work is not completed, including a final inspection, within that three year period, an application for a new permit shall be completed to finish the work started under the original building permit. Pro-rated permit fees against work completed and inspected will be assessed prior to the new permit being issued. A certificate of occupancy cannot be issued unless the building permit is finalized. An unfinalized building permit can cause financing, property sale transactions, insurance and other problems with the property.

SAMPLE BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION

COUNTY OF SONOMA - PERMIT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403 (707) 565-1900 FAX (707) 565-1103

Please Print Your Name:	Date Applied:
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INFORMATION WITHIN HEAVY LINE TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT

SITE LOCATION INFORMATION - PRINT CLEARLY			
Site Address:	City:	ZIP:	
Cross-Street:	APN:	Project Phone #: ()	Project Fax #: ()
Directions:	Subd. Name:	Unit #	Lot #
Describe Project:	Living Area	Contract Price:	
Garage			
Decks			
OWNER NAME AND ADDRESS		APPLICANT NAME AND ADDRESS	
Name:		Name:	
Mailing Address:		Mailing Address:	
City:	State:	City:	State:
ZIP:		ZIP:	
Day Ph: ()	Fax: ()	Day Ph: ()	Fax: ()
CONTRACTOR INFORMATION		OTHER PERSONS (ARCHITECT, ENGINEER, ETC.)	
Company Name:		Name:	
Address:		Address:	
City:	State:	City:	State:
ZIP:		ZIP:	
Day Ph: ()	Fax: ()	Day Ph: ()	Fax: ()
WORKER'S COMPENSATION DECLARATION		CONSTRUCTION LENDING DECLARATION	
I hereby affirm under penalty of perjury one of the following declarations: <input type="checkbox"/> I have and will maintain a certificate of consent to self-insure for worker's compensation, as provided for by Section 3700 of the Labor Code, for the performance of the work for which this permit is issued. <input type="checkbox"/> I have and will maintain worker's compensation insurance, as required by Section 3700 of the Labor Code, for the performance of the work for which this permit is issued. My worker's compensation insurance carrier and policy number are: Carrier _____ Policy No. _____ (This section need not be completed if the permit is for one hundred dollars (\$100) or less.) <input type="checkbox"/> I certify that in the performance of the work for which this permit is issued, I shall not employ any person in any manner so as to become subject to the worker's compensation laws of California, and agree that if I should become subject to the worker's compensation provisions of Section 3700 of the Labor Code, I shall forthwith comply with those provisions. Exp. Date: _____ Applicant: _____ WARNING: FAILURE TO SECURE WORKER'S COMPENSATION COVERAGE IS UNLAWFUL, AND SHALL SUBJECT AN EMPLOYER TO CRIMINAL PENALTIES AND CIVIL FINES UP TO ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$100,000), IN ADDITION TO THE COST OF COMPENSATION, DAMAGES PROVIDED FOR IN SECTION 3700 OF THE LABOR CODE, INTEREST, AND ATTORNEY'S FEES.		I hereby affirm under penalty of perjury that there is a construction lending agency for the performance of the work for which this permit is issued. (Sec. 3097, Civ. C.) Lenders Name _____ Lenders Address _____	
FOR DEPARTMENT USE			
Zoning/Use/Ordinances		File No. _____ Area _____	
Proposed Use/Requirements:		Front _____ Left _____ Right _____ Back _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Class: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Mitigation Required <input type="checkbox"/> Address subject to change		Approval for Permit Issuance: _____	
Approved for Permit Issuance:		Approval for Occupancy: _____	
By: _____		By: _____	
Date: _____		Date: _____	
Conditions: _____			
Sewer Connection: <input type="checkbox"/> Available <input type="checkbox"/> Fees Paid		Approved by: _____ Date: _____	
Road Encroachment: <input type="checkbox"/> Fees Paid		Approved by: _____ Date: _____	
Septic System Permit/Clearance #		Approved by: _____ Date: _____	
Flood Zone: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No 100 Year Flood Elevation:		Site Review	
Approved by: _____ Date: _____		Drainage Review:	
Approved by: _____ Date: _____		Fire:	
Approved by: _____ Date: _____		Code Enforcement Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Violation # _____	
This permit is limited to _____ days.			
Work Authorized: _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> Plans Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Post FIRM <input type="checkbox"/> Alquist Proto Report Available		<input type="checkbox"/> No Plans Subject to Field Inspection <input type="checkbox"/> Pre FIRM <input type="checkbox"/> Geotechnical report Available	
Planbook Cleared By: _____ Date: _____		Type of Construction _____ Occupancy _____ No. of Stories _____ No. of Bedrooms _____	
Permit Cleared for Insurance By: _____ Date: _____		Auto. Fire Sprinklers Req'd _____ No. of Units _____ Certificate of Occupancy _____	
Machine Space for Permit Fee			
PERMITTEE'S SIGNATURE			
ADDRESS _____		CITY _____ ZIP _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Other Licensed Professional			
Final Date: _____		Inspector: _____	

THIS PERMIT SHALL EXPIRE IN THREE(3) YEARS FROM DATE FEES ARE PAID UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED BY CODE ENFORCEMENT

Distribution: White - File Canary - Applicant Pink - Audit Copy Blue - Assessor Cardstock - Inspector

BUILDING CODES & ORDINANCES

The following codes and ordinances have been adopted by Sonoma County Ordinance No. 5373 and No. 5374 (Codified as Sonoma County Codes Chapter 7 "Building Regulations" and Chapter 13 "Fire Protection"), and shall be used in the preparation of construction documents:

CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE, 2010 edition, as modified from the "2009 International Building Code"

CALIFORNIA RESIDENTIAL CODE, 2010 edition, as modified from the "2009 International Residential Code"

CALIFORNIA GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS CODE, 2010 edition

CALIFORNIA RESIDENTIAL ENERGY STANDARDS, 2008 edition

CALIFORNIA PLUMBING CODE, 2010 edition, as modified from the "2009 Uniform Plumbing Code"

CALIFORNIA MECHANICAL CODE, 2010 edition, as modified from the "2009 Uniform Mechanical Code"

CALIFORNIA ELECTRICAL CODE, 2010 edition, as modified from the "2008 National Electrical Code"

CALIFORNIA FIRE CODE, 2010 edition; 2009 International Fire Code

SONOMA COUNTY CODE CHAPTER 7B, FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION

SONOMA COUNTY CODE CHAPTER 7A, "CLASS K HOUSING"

SONOMA COUNTY CODE, CHAPTER 13, ARTICLE V, "FIRE SAFE STANDARDS"

STATE OF CALIFORNIA TITLES 24 AND 25

There are five major sets of national standards designed to safeguard health and safety in every building. They are the CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE, CALIFORNIA MECHANICAL CODE, CALIFORNIA PLUMBING CODE, CALIFORNIA ELECTRICAL CODE and the UNIFORM HOUSING CODE. Also, the State of California has adopted energy regulations which will affect the design of a building.

It may be worthwhile to research the codes in a library. These codes are used by plan examiners to approve building plans and by building inspectors to approve construction methods. PRMD staff are available to answer code questions in the office and in the field.

The **CALIFORNIA BUILDING AND RESIDENTIAL CODES**: Prescribe minimum health and safety requirements for the construction of dwellings. These include the design and construction of foundations, floor systems, walls and roofs, including minimum sizes for rafters, joists, lintels, headers and stud wall framing.

The **CALIFORNIA MECHANICAL CODE**: Consists of a series of rules of safe practice involving heating systems, ventilating systems, cooling systems, combustion air requirements, and venting of

appliances. The safeguards provide protection against fire hazard and air contamination.

The **CALIFORNIA PLUMBING CODE**: Provides safety by means of safeguarding the potable water system within the building and insuring a safe means of collection and disposal of waste waters and sewage. This is accomplished by means of proper installation, adequate sizing, backflow prevention, air gaps, drain gaps, sanitary fixtures, and by traps, indirect wastes, and venting. This code also provides the regulations that govern the installation, sizing, and placement for gas piping serving residential appliances.

The **CALIFORNIA ELECTRICAL CODE**. Deals with safe electrical installations encompassing those items pertaining to safe workmanship standards and practices, isolation of live parts and conductors, insulation of conductors, circuit protection, and grounding. A safe installation will provide life safety by minimizing fire and shock hazards.

Equivalency Performance. All of the model codes are both prescriptive and performance codes that make provisions for alternate materials and methods of construction.

Volume 2 of the CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE makes provisions for the use of alternate materials and methods of construction through engineering analysis and design which substantiate compliance with vertical and lateral (wind and earthquake) loads occurring within the appropriate geographical area.

The other model codes have similar provisions to allow the use of alternate materials and methods of construction by utilizing tests and/or engineering analysis to substantiate equivalency based on safety, durability, effectiveness, strength, sanitation and quality.

The Codes allow the designer latitude in selecting construction methods, structural systems, materials of construction, physical layouts and unusual shapes provided that they can demonstrate that the material, method, or work offered is equivalent to that prescribed in the code in quality, strength effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, and safety. This makes the CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE a performance code.

The Codes also provide specification standards that are historically known to satisfy the code requirements. The standard, or conventional, residential construction methods are, for the most part, covered in this handbook by details demonstrating acceptable code conforming practices.

The following safety items will serve to describe some of the requirements of the codes.

BUILDING CODE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

WIND LOADS. (Chapter 16 2010 CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE). Wind pressure varies for different geographical locations. Code requirements have been developed utilizing tabulated weather data. Wind forces which act on structures are considered to move laterally in a horizontal plane. This level movement creates “pushing forces” on the windward side of upright or inclined surfaces, as well as causing “suction forces” on the leeward side. Horizontal surfaces can have “suction” or “uplift forces” as a result of horizontal wind action.

Most of Sonoma County is considered to be Wind exposure “C”, 85 mph. Some protected sites might be exposure “B”, 85 mph, and ocean frontage would be exposure “D”, 85 mph.

SEISMIC LOADS. For Sonoma County, the earthquake lateral force requirements for buildings is

derived from the CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE. This uses the weight of the building along with coefficients which take into account the strength of the building, its vibrational characteristics, as well as the soil effect.

Sonoma County is within Seismic Design Categories D and E as determined by Chapter 16 of the California Building Code and D₁, D₂, and E as determined by Section R301 of the California Residential Code.

APPLICATION OF WIND AND EARTHQUAKE FORCES. Wind and earthquake forces are applied independent of each other. They are applied parallel to two major perpendicular axis of the building, one axis at a time.

FOUNDATION LOADS AND SOIL PRESSURES. Foundations serve to support the total load of building and structures. Table 1806.2 of the CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE provides for classification of soils. Identification of soil type must be by a soils engineer if bearing capacity values greater than 1,500 pounds per square foot are used (Sonoma County assumes Class 5 soil). Sizing of foundations should distribute loads to minimize differential settlement. Caisson (piles) should not be mixed with spread footings or continuous footings due to settlement considerations.

RETAINING WALLS. A retaining wall must hold back the soil mass and any surcharge on it. For a level backfill without any surcharge, the assumed lateral soil loads shall be a minimum of 60 pounds per square foot per foot of depth for active pressure and 100 pounds per square foot per foot of depth for at-rest pressure or shall be taken from a geotechnical report. Retaining walls need to be well drained (unless designed for the buoyant weight of soil plus hydrostatic loads) and backfilled with non-expansive, inorganic soils. See Section 18, "Miscellaneous" of this handbook for further information.

REQUIRED APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

DRAWINGS, CALCULATIONS, SPECIFICATIONS. Plans and specifications shall be drawn to scale upon sheets of uniform size, 24" x 36" minimum. Plans and supporting documentation should adequately define the location, nature, and extent of all work proposed, and demonstrate compliance to current codes and regulations. The use of a scale of ¼"=1' is encouraged.

Four sets of drawings must be submitted to the Permit & Resource Management Department. These sets must also include two (2) copies of Title 24 Energy Calculations, two (2) copies of the CalGreen Checklist, two (2) copies of structural calculations, and two (2) copies of geotechnical reports, where applicable. Please note that most geotechnical reports require that the foundation design be reviewed and approved by the geotechnical engineer. Incomplete submittals will not be accepted.

An unlicensed person is limited to the design of:

- a. Single-family dwellings of light woodframe conventional construction not more than two stories and a basement in height.
- b. Multiple dwellings containing no more than four dwelling units of conventional woodframe construction, not more than two stories and a basement in height. Not more than four dwelling units per lot.
- c. Garages or other structures appurtenant to dwellings of conventional woodframe construction not more than two stories and a basement in height.

- d. Agricultural and ranch buildings of conventional woodframe construction.

An unlicensed person may **not** design the following:

- a. Any non-conventional component that affects the safety of any building or its occupants, including but not limited to structural or seismic components.
- b. All commercial structures.
- c. Any building that the building official deems an undue risk to the public health, safety or welfare.

All structures designed by an architect or engineer must include plans with appropriate stamps and signatures, on all appropriate sheets and any structural calculations.

The following list of items should be considered at the earliest possible time to facilitate the design of your project:

- 1. Land use limitations - Zoning Section
- 2. Earthquake faults - Alquist/Priolo Zones
- 3. Geological hazards - Landslides, geo-soil report
- 4. Flood zones (Sonoma County Code 7-B), waterways, creeks, etc.

ENGINEERING CALCULATIONS. Computations, stress diagrams, and other data sufficient to justify the design shown in the plans shall be provided (two originals) by the responsible licensed professional. Engineering calculations are required for light-frame residential construction of unusual shape, size or framing, or other structural irregularities listed in Section 20 of this manual (and Sections 2308.2, 2308.11, & 2308.12 of the California Building Code), and shall be designed to resist vertical loads as well as lateral loads from wind and earthquake.

SITE PLAN. The site plan must include all elements of the PRMD Standard Site Plan (Form CSS-019). It is recommended that the owner and/or applicant meet with PRMD staff and understand septic and zoning regulations before preparing a site plan. The site plan must include the location of proposed new construction and location of all existing structures; front side, and rear setback distances between structures and between recorded easements, septic tank, leach field, expansion area, well location, creeks, ponds, streams and drainage ways. The site plan must be accurately drawn to scale, no smaller than 1 inch = 20' and include a North arrow. A vicinity map is also helpful for larger parcels.

GRADING PLAN. A topographic map, showing existing and proposed finish grades, is required. Five sets of grading plans must be submitted for grading permit applications. Culverts require a hydrology calculation.

SITE DRAINAGE. The site plan should reflect the existence of any slopes at (or proposed at) the building site, including existing and proposed drainage flow patterns. Natural water flow must be diverted away from the foundations. Surface water must enter and leave the property in the same manner before and after construction, unless carried to an approved storm drain.

FLOOR PLAN. Show (existing and proposed) location, size, dimensions, and use of all rooms, and location, size, and type of windows and doors. Show plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, Title 24 compliant lighting controls, and heat source. (Recommended ¼" scale).

FOUNDATION PLAN AND DETAILS. Provide adequate details to demonstrate type, location, extent and construction of foundation. Show all dimensions and spacing of footings, piers, stemwalls, posts, and girders. Provide size and spacing of anchor bolts, hold downs, etc. Specify

type and size of mudsill. Use and identify stepped footings when bottom of footing slope will be steeper than one vertical to ten horizontal. Provide and accurately cross-reference details and elevation views showing steps, offsets, dimensions, reinforcement sizes, clearances, placement, and lap splices. Locate and specify size of underfloor and access vents.

FRAMING PLANS. Provide plans for all floors and roof framing. Indicate size, material type, grade, and spacing of members. Clearly indicate member lengths and their supports and connections. Provide and cross reference section cuts and details to clarify construction and load paths. Framing may be placed on architectural floor plan and foundation plan only if it can be done adequately and without confusion.

STRUCTURAL DETAILS. Provide sufficient details to clearly indicate method of construction, attachment of framing members, nailing, specific notching conditions, bolt spacing and location, etc. When attaching new to existing construction, provide adequate information pertaining to the existing structure to justify new loadings and the load transfer into the foundation-soil interface. Submit pre-manufactured truss design and layout (with approval from the Engineer or Architect of Record, if applicable), and obtain approval prior to calling for underfloor or slab inspection. Specify all flood resistant materials.

CROSS SECTION. Show a minimum of two true cross sections of the building, at least one in each direction, indicating the structural elements and materials, size, and spacing of framing members, lateral and vertical force transfers, insulation, vertical dimensions, roof slope, underfloor clearances, flashings, etc. ($\frac{3}{8}$ " scale, minimum). For houses in flood zones being raised indicate BFE (Base Flood Elevation) and the FFE (Finished Floor Elevation).

ELEVATIONS. Provide a minimum of four exterior building elevations, indicating materials, bracing, actual slope of ground, type of roofing, railings, foundation subdrains, and stepped footings. Show natural and finish grade $\frac{1}{4}$ " scale is preferred.

ENERGY CONSERVATION DOCUMENTATION (see Section 3 of this handbook.)

The following minimum information must be provided on all plans submitted for plancheck:

1. Heat source location, type, efficiency, and output capacity. (Must be capable of maintaining 68 degrees at three feet above the floor.)
2. Water heater type, location, fuel, and size.
3. Insulation location, type, and R-value.
4. Window and skylight type, location, and area.
5. Location and details for any other energy conservation feature such as vented attic spaces and thermal mass.
6. All "Mandatory Features" as required by the State Energy Regulations, including compliant lighting controls on incandescent fixtures.
7. A copy of the CF-1R Form and MF-1R Form, signed by the document author and building designer or building owner **shall be part of** the plans. Also provide two (2) sets of the **complete** Energy Report documentation.

CALGREEN CHECKLIST: For all new residential structures, provide a Green Building Checklist outlining all required mandatory and elective green building features in order to achieve Tier 1 compliance. Identified green building features must also be indicated on the affected sheets of the proposed plans. See Appendix No. 6 for additional information.

BRACED WALL PLAN: Provide a braced wall plan showing location size and description of all braced wall panels including anchor bolt size and spacing, holdown locations, mechanical strapping, and sole plates in accordance with CBC 2308.3 and CRC R602.10.

OTHER: Other documentation may be required to clearly show the intent of the improvements or proposed development. As an example, when presenting remodel or addition plans, show features of the existing structure which adjoin, affect, or will be affected by the improvement.

MISCELLANEOUS: Permits issued on or after July 1, 1999 expire by limitation and become null and void if the work authorized is not completed within three (3) years from the date the permit is issued.

If the permit was issued prior to July 1, 1999, progress must be shown every 180 days to ensure an active status on the permit. Requests for extension of time to start work due to inclement weather or other hardship should be made in writing addressed to the Building Official and should be made during the time the permit is valid and has not expired due to either no-start or abandonment. Progress inspections can be utilized to avoid permit expiration. Some actual progress must be documented at each progress inspection visit. If construction cannot start within 180 days after the issuance of a permit, the permit may be canceled, and a partial refund may be allowed. All requests for refunds are processed by the Permit & Resource Management Department and will be refunded by mail from the Auditor's Office.

A temporary power pole for construction purposes may be installed with an issued building permit. Under certain conditions, a temporary gas and/or electric meter set may be approved.

A Temporary Occupancy Permit may be obtained before final inspection when all required PRMD approvals have been issued and the building inspector determines that the structure can be occupied with no danger to life, limb, or public health.

Appeal of a decision by the Building Official must be submitted to the Board of Building Appeals within 30 days after the decision has been rendered. An appeal must be filed in writing on forms available at PRMD.

POST HOUSE NUMBERS, AND MARK JOB SITE WITH OWNER'S NAME

Identification of the location or work (job site) is not only necessary to ensure delivery of materials, but also to ensure inspections. Further, a street address in conformance with the Fire Safe Ordinance allows an effective emergency response in case of fire or accident.

BUILDING INSPECTION PROCEDURES

See Appendix page 1.3 for "Building Inspection Procedures" and Appendix page 1.5 for "Revisions to Building Permits". Final inspections must be called for and approved before occupancy can be allowed.