

Do I Need a Building Permit?



Planning and Public Works

Visit our office:

6000 Main St SW
Lakewood, WA 98499

Contact us:

(253) 512-2261

Permit Center
permits@cityoflakewood.us

Rental Housing Safety
Program
rentals@cityoflakewood.us

Business Licensing
businesslicensing@cityoflakewood.us

Engineering
publicworksengineering@cityoflakewood.us

Planning
planning@cityoflakewood.us

Revised:
May 20, 2025

Code References:

- International Building Code 105.1
- International Mechanical Code 106.1
- Uniform Plumbing Code 104.1
- Lakewood Municipal Code (LMC) Chapter 18A.60
- LMC Chapter 16.10
- LMC Chapter 14.142
- LMC Chapter 15

Overview

The City of Lakewood requires permits for many residential and commercial projects to ensure safety for community residents and the environment. However, some projects do not require a permit.

All work, even work that does not require a permit, must be done in a manner that complies with code requirements. It is the building owner's or authorized agent's responsibility to verify the location of the exempt structure is allowed by all regulatory agencies.

The information provided in this brochure may not reflect the most updated regulations and is not intended to address all development.

In the event a Planning and Public Works Department (PPW) permit is not required for the projects listing in this brochure, you may need to obtain a separate permit from another agency including but not limited to the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Pierce County Sewer, Lakewood Water District, or West Pierce Fire & Rescue.

Do I need a permit?

If you live or do business within the City of Lakewood, contact the Planning and Public Works Department to discuss your proposed project scope:

- Schedule a virtual or in person appointment with our Tech of the Day [HERE](#)
- Visit us Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 12pm in the office at 6000 Main St SW Lakewood, WA 98499
- Call us at (253) 512-2261
- Email us at permits@cityoflakewood.us
- Visit our website [HERE](#)

Permits are **NOT** required for the following:

- Sheds:
 - Residential, single-story, detached, unconditioned, accessory structures that will be used as tool/storage sheds, playhouses, or similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
 - Commercial, single-story, detached, accessory structures used as tool/storage sheds, and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
- Carports: Unattached and under 120 square feet.
- Retaining Walls: Non-shoreline, upland retaining walls that are not over 4 feet high measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge (such as a backfill of soils, road, driveways, parking, building, foundation, or hydrostatic pressures such as underground stormwater infiltration facilities,) or storage tanks holding any type of combustible or flammable liquid.
- Water tanks: 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.
- Fences:
 - Located on private property
 - Front yard fences – 4 feet high and under unless along a principal arterial.
 - Rear yard fences - 6 feet high and under.
 - **Exceptions:** If located near or within a critical area, a critical area buffer or Ordinary High-Water Mark may also trigger the need for permits.
- Gates: Please review Fire Code Requirements for emergency access and site development setback requirements when abutting a public right of way.
- Decks: Not attached to buildings, are less than 30 inches above grade at any point, less than 200 square feet, do not serve as main entry door, and are not more than 18 inches high for shoreline properties. **Exceptions:** when near critical area, or critical area buffer, a permit is required to review placement.
- Repairs: ordinary repairs to structures, replacement of lamps or the connection of *approved* portable electrical equipment to *approved* permanently installed receptacles. Such repairs shall not include the cutting away of any wall, partition or

portion thereof, the removal or cutting of any structural beam or load-bearing support, or the removal or change of any required means of egress, or rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements; nor shall ordinary repairs include *addition* to, *alteration* of, replacement or relocation of any water supply, sewer, drainage, drain leader, gas, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, electric wiring or mechanical or other work affecting public health or general safety.

- Non-covered platforms, sidewalks, and driveways - are not more than 18 inches above grade on waterfront properties, 30 inches above grade on non-waterfront properties and not over any basement or story below, or are not part of an accessible route.
- Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
- Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
- Swings and other playground equipment. (residential only)
- Window awnings are supported by an exterior wall that does not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and does not require additional support in zones R-3 or when occupancy classification is U.
- Temporary motion picture, television, and theater stage sets and scenery.
- Non-fixed and moveable cases, counters, and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches high.
- Garage door replacement.
- Gutter installation or work.

Examples of Projects That WILL Require a Building Permit:

- All residential or commercial additions (adding square footage to existing buildings).
- A structure or new impervious surface of ANY size located within the shoreline buffer or in a critical area or their buffers and setbacks. This includes decks and patios under 18 inches in height.
- Residential storage buildings over 120 square feet.
- Residential storage building that will have any mechanical equipment such as heat pump, pump house, generator.
- Roofing: Repair or maintenance of roofing or flashing of a single-family residence or associated accessory buildings, provided that no structural work is done including no sheathing being replaced. Recover roofs with single roofing material installed on the existing roof.
- Carports – attached and carports that are 121+ square feet.
- Commercial storage buildings over 120 square feet.

- Fences:
 - Per LMC 18A.60.090(B)(12) a zoning variance may be required.
 - Fences are not allowed in public rights-of way without a ROW permit approved by the City Engineer.
 - Front yard fences over 4 feet high.
 - Rear yard fences over 6 feet high.
 - Located near or within a critical area, a critical area buffer or Ordinary High-Water Mark.
- For gates, please review Fire Code Requirements for emergency access and site development setback requirements when abutting a public right of way.
- Retaining walls over 4 feet tall or supporting structures, & surcharges listed above
- Above-ground swimming pools over 24 inches deep.
- All in-ground swimming pools.
- Shoreline bulkheads.
- Boathouses.
- All building demolitions.
- Doors and Windows (New or Replacement).
- Siding.
- Covered Porches (includes Manufactured Homes).
- Moving a building.
- Temporary uses and/or structures.
- All structural remodeling-Interior & Exterior.
- Insulation and Sheetrock/Wallboard Installation.
- Decks – see exceptions in previous section.
- Residential re-roofing over 2,100 square feet or recover roofs regardless of the size with two or more roofing material installed on the existing structure.
- All commercial re-roofing.
- All commercial remodeling (Tenant Improvement).
- Commercial occupancy of an existing building.
- Commercial storage rack systems over 5 feet 9 inches tall.
- Plumbing work (except for stopping leaks).
- Mechanical work (except repairs of appliances).
- Install or relocate gas lines.