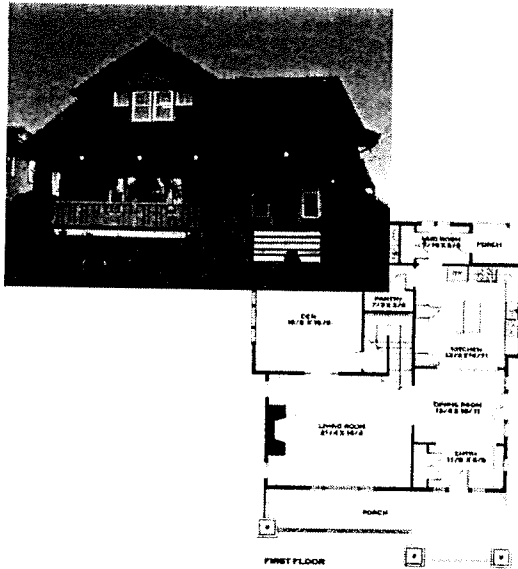


Why do I Need Approvals and Inspections?

An explanation of the importance of building codes and inspection services



The Ohio Board of Building Standards

6606 Tussing Road, PO Box 4009
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068-9009
614-644-2613

www.com.state.oh.us/dic/dicbbs.htm
dic.bbs@com.state.oh.us

• Who Writes the Codes?

Building codes are developed in a way similar to the law making process. Many groups of people are involved; building officials, fire officials, developers, material suppliers, the public, engineers, architects, builders, research and testing labs, and governmental leaders.

Several years ago the three major code organizations - BOCA (Building Officials and Code Administrators), ICBO (International Council of Building Officials) and SBCCI (Southern Building Code Congress) - merged to form ICC (International Code Council). Hearings are held every 18 months for code changes. Anyone who would like to make a change to the code can submit a code change.

One-, two-, and three-family residential dwellings are regulated locally by certified residential building departments. Residential buildings are required to comply with the requirements of the Residential Code of Ohio (RCO). The RCO is based upon the International Residential Code and adopted by the Ohio Board of Building Standards (BBS). Construction regulated by the Residential Code of Ohio will be inspected by BBS certified departments using certified inspectors.

• What is a Plan Approval and why is it needed?

Plan approval is simply a review of your projects' drawings and specification to make sure the builder incorporates all the features into your project and does so in a way that assures that it is safe and sanitary. Plan approval establishes your legal right (license), as provided for in Ohio law, to build what is described on the approved construction documents. Construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications is the best

way to make sure you are getting the building you desire, that it is safe and sanitary for occupancy, and that you secure your right to build what is approved.

• Why do inspections need to be made?

It could easily be said that an owner's cheapest form of "insurance" is that of getting inspections made at the appropriate times during construction. Few owners are familiar enough with or qualified to perform the variety of work necessary in a construction project, alteration, or addition. Alterations, additions, or modifications to structural, electrical, mechanical, or plumbing systems require specialized skills and, by obtaining an approval and inspections, there is a much higher level of assurance that the project complies with safety codes and that the structural, electrical distribution grounding and bonding, gas piping, plumbing, and mechanical systems are installed properly. Additionally, not only does the law requires owners to obtain permits and inspections, but lending institutions and insurance companies want to protect the asset that they are funding or insuring. If a problem develops, having obtained approvals and inspections will support an owner's claims if problems develop during and after construction. The process ultimately ends with the receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy.

What about Non-residential Buildings?

In Ohio, all non-residential buildings (other than 1-, 2-, and 3-family dwellings, and agricultural buildings) are required to comply with the requirements of the Ohio Building, Mechanical, and Plumbing Codes. These are based upon the International Code Council's model code documents and are adopted by the Ohio Board of Building Standards (BBS) with modifications to fit Ohio's laws, climate, and geology.

• What is covered by the residential code and what isn't?

The most important thing an owner can do when contemplating a building project is to talk to the Residential Building Official first to get an idea of things that the owner should consider before proceeding with a project. This should be an open discussion in which the Building Official's experience can be a benefit to the owner's planning. Many issues, if discussed on the front end of a project, can have little or minimal impact on a project and it makes the process a smooth one for the owner.

Work that is exempt from approval. There is some work that does trigger the building code and can be done without approvals and inspections. It must be remembered, however, that exemption from the requirements of the code do not grant authorization for any work to be done in any unsafe or hazardous manner in violation of the provisions of the code, laws, or ordinances of the local jurisdiction. Approvals are not required for the following:

Building:

1. One-story detached accessory structures, provided the floor area does not exceed 200 square feet.
2. Fences not over 6 feet high.
3. Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge.
4. 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.
5. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not over any basement or story below.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.

7. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
8. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a one, two, or three-family dwelling.
9. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches (1372 mm) from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

Electrical:

Repairs and maintenance: *Approval* shall not be required for minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.

Gas:

1. Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliances.
2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
3. Portable fuel cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliance.
2. Portable ventilation appliances.
3. Portable cooling unit.
4. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
5. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
6. Portable evaporative cooler.
7. Self-contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds (4.54 kg) or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.
8. Portable fuel cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.

The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil,

waste or vent pipe; provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drainpipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and *an approval* shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.

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.

Design is the Key

While codes cannot prevent every disaster, they are meant to provide reasonable tools for managing risk for the construction, use, and occupancy of buildings. These risk management tools are minimum standards for the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants and, secondarily, protection of the structure. A good building design can provide safety and sanitation without sacrificing aesthetic value, functionality, and cost efficiency.

Local building departments are committed to preserving the public health, safety, and welfare in all jurisdictions under their jurisdiction through the effective, efficient use, and enforcement of the building code requirements in Ohio.

Should you have any questions regarding codes or construction, please feel free to your local your certified building department's certified Residential or Non-residential Building Official or call the Ohio Board of Building Standards.
