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Department of Building Inspection

Frequently Asked Questions

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PERMIT SERVICES

1. How do I find out the status of my building permit application?

You may contact the Department of Building Inspection, General Information Line at (415) 558-6088, or visit 1660 Mission Street, 1st Floor Public Information Counter or you may track your project online at www.sfdbi.org/dbipts.

2. What is the permit fee to file for a building permit or to submit plans?

The permit fee depends on the project valuation. You need to contact the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau at (415) 558-6070 for a permit fee estimate. Depending on the project, you may be required to pay fees to the San Francisco Fire Department, Planning Department, SF Department of Public Health, Department of Public Works, School District, as well as to the Department of Building Inspection. When an application is submitted, the Counter Plans Examiner determines which agencies will review your application.

3. What is a Pre-Application Plan Review? How does it work?

There are times when an applicant is not sure whether specific areas of the proposed design are code compliant as interpreted by the Department of Building Inspection and whether certain existing non-conforming conditions can remain as is. Before committing considerable time and resources on the final design, the applicant can request a Pre-Application Review to address such questions, clarify specific code issues, and check whether the Department of Building Inspection will accept the interpretation and application of specific code sections. Pre-Application review is not intended for general overall review.

Request for a Pre-Application review must be submitted in writing, along with payment, to Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services. List the items in the form of specific questions with the pertinent code references and include applicable drawings and documents and the applicant's own interpretations regarding each question asked. The applicants are expected to conduct their own detailed research before submitting their questions. Again, please note that this service is not intended for general overall review. After receipt of all of the aforementioned required items, the applicant will be notified of a meeting date within three business

days or will receive a written response of the inquiries within ten business days. The initial fee covers the first two review hours. Additional fees may apply if more time is needed for review.

If review is required by the San Francisco Fire Department, Fire fee is also required for a minimum charge of two hours. A separate copy of all the required items as mentioned above must be submitted to the San Francisco Fire Department Plan Check, 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

For further information and to obtain a pre-application plan review service information package, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services at (415) 558-6133 or download at <http://sfdbi.org/forms-handouts>.

4. Does the Department of Building Inspection offer Premium Plan Review Service? How does it work? Is there a fee involved?

Premium Plan Review Service is offered by the Department of Building Inspection's plan review staff and does not involve any other City agencies such as Planning or Fire Department. The turnaround time depends on the size and complexity of the project. A written request for Premium Plan Review Service is required indicating approval from the appropriate Division Manager. A guaranteed plan review turnaround time for a thorough, complete plan review with comments and corrections will be established. The cost of the Premium Plan Review fee will be based on 50% of plan review fee. For more information, you may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services at (415) 558-6133 or the General Information Line at (415) 558-6088.

5. Where do I submit revisions to my building permit application that is currently under review?

Revision(s) initiated by the permit applicant may be submitted by appointment with the plan examiner who is currently reviewing the building permit application.

Responding to plans examiner's comments on project(s) for code compliance must make a recheck appointment with the assigned plans examiner prior to their submittal.

To schedule an appointment, please contact the plans examiner directly. You may call the Department of Building Inspection, General Information Line at (415) 558-6088 for contact information view our DBI Staff and Email Directory via <http://sfdbi.org/contact-us>.

6. How do I submit revisions to my issued building permit?

You will need to fill out a new permit application form and under the General Description (item # 16 on Form 3/8), indicate what permit application number you are revising and provide a brief description of the changes. Depending on the scope of work, you would have to submit two sets of stamped and wet signed revised plans; two sets of calculations (structural and mechanical/energy); two sets of soils reports; two sets of reference plans, etc. If you need more information, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Technical Services Division at (415) 558-6205.

7. How do I request an extension for a building permit application currently under review? How many extensions are allowed?

To extend a building permit application under review, a written request must be provided to the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Plan Review Services at (415) 558-6133. Extension fees apply. Only one extension is allowed, allowing for an additional 360 days.

8. Does my project qualify for Over-the-Counter review and issuance?

Please contact the Department of Building Inspection, Over-the-Counter Services at 415-558-6003 or view our website - <http://sfdbi.org/expanded-over-counter-services> for a list of qualifying projects.

9. Is it possible to reinstate a cancelled building permit application?

No, a cancelled building permit application cannot be reinstated. Customers must reapply for a new permit.

10. How long can an applicant wait to pick up an approved building permit application?

Permits must be issued within 100 calendar days from the permit approval date. A Notice of Cancellation is mailed alerting the applicant when only 21 days remain to obtain the permit prior to cancellation. A one-time extension of 360 days at any time during

the approval procedure may be granted by the Director of the Department of Building Inspection upon written request by the applicant. Payment should also be included with the request. If you need additional information please contact the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau at (415) 558-6070 for further information.

11. How long is a building permit valid?

The duration of a permit depends on the estimated cost of the work to be done. A copy of the fee schedule indicating valuation, fee and time allowed to complete the work is available at the Public Information Counter or by calling the Department of Building Inspection, General Information Line at (415) 558-6088.

12. What is the process of changing or adding a contractor once the permit has been issued?

The owner may notify the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau, 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or fax (415) 558-6170, stating:

- The building permit application number
- Job address
- A request to remove the former contractor listed on the job, and the effective date (if applicable)
- The name of the new contractor with:
 - A current California State Contractor License number and expiration date;
 - Valid San Francisco Business Tax Registration Certificate number and expiration date;
 - Current California Worker's Compensation Certificate.

13. What is the process to appeal the issuance of a building permit?

Obtain a copy of both sides of the permit application from the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau, and then file the appeal with the Board of Appeals. You have 15 calendar days from the day of issuance to file an appeal. You need to submit 11 copies of the application including any supporting documents plus a filing fee. Should you need further assistance, please call (415) 575-6880 or visit www.sfgov.org/boa.

14. How may I request a building address change or the addition of a building number to my building?

Please contact the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau at (415) 558-6070. The property owner must submit a request for an appointment via email with all relevant information to: dbi.cpbrequest@sfgov.org for address change or house number addition. If qualified, a building permit will be necessary. A fee of \$262.00 applies to each request for a building address change or a new building number.

15. Where do I review soil reports? Can I get a copy of the soil reports?

The soils reports are available for public review at the Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services during normal business hours. You may submit a written request if a copy is required. The requested copy will be ready within ten business days from the receipt date. Fees apply. For additional information, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services at (415) 558-6133.

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INSPECTION SERVICES

1. What time is building construction allowed? Can work be done on weekends?

Building construction can occur during the hours of 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM, seven days a week, including holidays. Any work done before or after these hours must not exceed the noise level of five decibels at the nearest lot line unless a special permit has been granted to allow this. Five decibels is similar to the sound of a screw gun installing screws in drywall. This is detailed in Police Code Article 29, Sections 2907 and 2908. Construction related noise complaints can be directed to the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services at (415) 558-6570. Construction related complaints beyond the allowed hours should be directed to your local police station.

2. What are the notification procedures for issuance of new building permits/alteration permits?

For new construction building permits, a 30" x 30" sign is posted on the lot within 24 hours after a building permit is issued new construction. The posted sign displays the permit and appeals information.

For alteration permits such as structural additions, a letter is sent upon permit issuance to the owners of adjacent properties.

Upon issuance of a permit to demolish a building, mail notice is sent to owner of all properties within 300 feet of the building to be demolished.

There are two types of notifications:

- Notification of filing of the permit application
- Notification of issuance of the permit

3. Who do I contact to file a complaint about illegal construction activity?

You may call Inspection Services at (415) 558-6570 to file a complaint. When filing a complaint, please provide us with the valid property address and the type of work being done. You may also file a complaint online www.sfdbi.org/filing-complaint.

4. Are there any complaints/violations in my apartment building?

You may call the Department of Building Inspection, General Information Line at (415) 558-6088 to check if there are any abated and current complaints/violations. You may also view complaints online at www.sfdbi.org/dbipts.

5. What can I do if I cannot start work within the required 90 days?

You need to file for an extension to start work before the end of the 90 days. Submit a request for time extension to start work to the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Building Inspection Division at 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or call (415) 558-6570 for further information. Extension fees apply.

6. Where do I go to file an extension for an issued building permit?

For active issued building permits, a Request for Building Permit Time Extension Form needs to be submitted to the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Building Inspection Division at 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or you may call (415) 558-6570. Extension fees apply. The form may be downloaded at www.sfdbi.org/forms-handouts. Please bring your building permit and the job card with you.

7. Does the Department of Building Inspection offer off-hour inspections? What is the fee?

Yes, we do offer off-hour inspections on active permit application and charge a minimum of two hours. You need to fill out a "Service Request Application" form. For plumbing off-hour inspection request, the form must be accompanied by a typewritten letter in company letterhead stating the reason and when off-hour inspection is needed. If it is for a Homeowner's permit, a plain typed letter stating the reason and when off-hour inspection is needed. All requests need to be pre-approved and prepaid. The off-hour inspection is done before 7:30 AM or after 4:00 PM during weekdays or during weekend. Submit off-hour inspection request at Inspection Services counter on the 3rd floor at 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Under the new fees that took effect on September 2, 2008 on all building permits issued on or after September 2, 2008, the two-hour minimum off-hour inspection fee is \$340.00 (\$170/hour). For further information, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services at (415) 558-6570 or visit DBI website at www.sfdbi.org.

8. Who issues elevator permits/inspects elevators?

Elevator permits are issued by the State of California, Department of Industrial Relations - Elevator Unit. Their office is located at 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1301, Oakland, CA 94612, or you may call (510) 622-3026 or visit www.dir.ca.gov.

If the elevator is under construction, the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Building Inspection Division would have limited jurisdiction (location of unit, air, American Disability Act shaft walls, etc.)

If the elevator serves a commercial property, the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Building Inspection Division can investigate complaints for safety reasons and if need be, contact the State of California, Department of Industrial Relations - Elevator, Unit, as well as issue a Notice of Violation.

If the elevator is in residential apartments, units and hotels, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Housing Inspection Services (415) 558-6220.

9. Do I need a permit for an electrical upgrade?

Yes, you need to file for an Electrical Permit. Homeowners of a single-family detached dwelling may apply for the permit if they are doing the work themselves; otherwise, permits have to be applied for by a Licensed Electrical Contractor. For more information, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Electrical Inspection Division at (415) 558-6570.

10. Do you need to be a licensed plumber/electrician to do repair work?

For minor plumbing work not requiring cutting into or removal of piping, a permit is not required. You may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Plumbing Inspection Division at (415) 558-6570 for more information regarding permit requirements.

For electrical work requirements, you may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Electrical Inspection Division at (415) 558-6570.

11. Where do I pay for a re-inspection fee for plumbing/electrical?

For Electrical and Plumbing re-inspection fee, you do not need to fill out a new permit application, but do need to pay the fee at the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau. New fees took effect on September 2, 2008 that applies to all building permits issued on or after September 2, 2008. For further information, please call the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services at (415) 558-6570 or visit DBI website at www.sfdbi.org.

12. Where do I submit a Boiler Inspection form?

You can mail the form to the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Plumbing Inspection Division, 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. For further information, please call (415) 558-6570. Application for Permit to Operate Boiler is available at www.sfdbi.org/forms-handouts.

13. What is a Special Inspection, and when is one required?

Special Inspection requirements are found in Sections 1701 to 1704 of the San Francisco Building Code. Special Inspection is the monitoring of the materials and workmanship that are critical to the integrity of the building structure or public safety. On specific project related questions, the project sponsor should contact the engineer or architect on record for information. If you have general code questions, you may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Plan Review Services - Technical Services Division at (415) 558-6205. If further clarification is required, the architect or engineer on record may contact the Department of Building Inspection staff indicated on the Special Inspection Form at (415) 558-6132.

14. Where and when do I obtain a Certificate of Completion and Occupancy for my building?

A Certificate of Final Completion and Occupancy is issued for any change of building use, new building construction, new additions to existing buildings and the construction of new habitable space in existing buildings. This Certificate is issued by the Building Inspector at the end of the final inspection for that project and may also be signed by a San Francisco Fire Inspector and a Housing Inspector if they were required to provide inspections for that permit. It is important to remember that this Certificate will always be issued by the Building Inspector. You may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Inspection Services - Building Inspection Division at (415) 558-6570. Building Inspector office hours are 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM and 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

15. Where do I get a copy of a Certificate of Completion and Occupancy for my home or apartment building?

You may contact the Department of Building Inspection, Records Management Division at (415) 558-6080. Fees apply.

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GENERAL

1. Where do I find out who owns the fence? Which side determines ownership, flat side or the support side?

This is a civil matter and not in the Department of Building Inspection's jurisdiction. The law does not require a fence. A survey may often be required to determine ownership. Survey results should be compared to your property lot-line records on file at the Assessor-Recorder's Office, City Hall, Room 190, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94103, or call (415) 554-5596.

Generally, fence ownership is 50/50 with adjacent neighbors.

A record request can also be made on both adjacent properties to find out if any building permits were filed for building of the fence. The Record Request form can be found at the Public Information Counter or visit www.sfdbi.org. Please call (415) 558-6080 for any records assistance.

2. Where do I go to obtain copies of building plans, floor plans, and blue prints?

You may submit a Records Request Form to the Department of Building Inspection, Records Management Division at (415) 558-6080, 1660 Mission Street, 4th floor. The request form is available on our website - <http://sfdbi.org/request-duplication-official-building-plans>. Fees apply.

3. Where do I go to request a refund?

Refunds may be submitted to the Department of Building Inspection, Refund Unit, 1660 Mission Street, 6th Floor. The Request for Refund Form is available on our website – <http://sfdbi.org/forms-handouts>.

4. Do I need a San Francisco business license to do building code work in San Francisco?

You need a Business Tax Registration Certification number before performing any work in San Francisco. To register, contact the Tax Collector's Office, Taxpayer Assistance, City Hall, Room 140, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 554-4400 or visit www.sftreasurer.org.

5. Where do I go to file for sidewalk and/or encroachment permits?

Sidewalk repair permits can be filed with the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Street Use and Mapping, please call (415) 558-6060. They are issued by the Department of Building Inspection, Permit Services - Central Permit Bureau at 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 558-6070.

Encroachment permits are issued by the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Street Use and Mapping, 875 Stevenson Street, Room 460, (415) 554-5810 1155 Market Street, 3rd Floor, (415) 554-5827, or visit www.sfdpw.org.

6. Who do I contact regarding asbestos inspection?

SF Department of Public Health - Environmental Health Division, 1390 Market Street, Suite 210, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 252-3800, <http://www.sfdph.org>. The Bay Area Air Quality Management Division is also responsible for monitoring sandblasting, asbestos removal and commercial kitchen exhaust output. They are located at 939 Ellis Street, San Francisco, CA 94109 and may be reached at (415) 771-6000 or visit www.baaqmd.gov.

7. Where do I inquire regarding the Condominium Conversion process?

Department of Public Works, Bureau of Street Use and Mapping, 1155 Market Street, 3rd Floor, (415) 554-5827, or visit their website www.sfdpw.org.

8. What Department do I contact regarding an easement between properties?

Assessor-Recorder's Office, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, City Hall, Room 190, San Francisco, CA 94102-4698, or call (415) 554-5596 or visit www.sfassessor.org.

9. Where do I inquire regarding property liens?

Assessor-Recorder's Office, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, City Hall, Room 190, San Francisco, CA 94102-4698, or call (415) 554-5596 or visit www.sfassessor.org.

10. Who do I contact to check if a contractor is licensed?

Contractors State License Board at 1-(800) 321-CSLB or www.cslb.ca.gov.

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