

Building Safety FAQ

Planning and Development Services Department

www.lawrenceks.org

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Building Safety Division Overview

The Building Safety Division is responsible for enforcement of the City’s adopted building construction and remodeling codes, building and trade contractor licensing, and trade worker licensing (mechanical/HVAC, electrical and plumbing trades). Building Safety Division functions include review of building permit applications and required building plans and drawings, issuance of building permits, inspection of buildings and building systems during construction to verify compliance with applicable codes, issuance of Certificates of Occupancy upon satisfactory completion of building projects, and administration of general contractor, trade contractor and trade worker licensing regulations.

Below are frequently asked questions about building codes, building permits, building permit inspections, building and trade contractor licensing, trade work worker licensing and building permit records. Questions may be directed to Building Safety via email at buildinginspections@lawrenceks.org, fax at (785) 832-3110 or phone at (785) 832-7700, option 2. Additional information is available on the [City’s Development Services website](http://www.lawrenceks.org).

Requirement to Obtain a Building Permit and Building Permit Exemptions

1. What types of construction or remodeling work requires a building permit?

A building permit is required for new building construction; building additions; most building alterations and remodeling; installation of prefabricated buildings; work that involves construction or reconstruction of walls; work that involves installation of new or replacement electrical systems or equipment, plumbing systems or equipment, or mechanical systems or equipment (such as heating or air conditioning systems or equipment); extension of electrical circuits, plumbing supply lines, drains or vents, or heating or air conditioning ductwork; fences over six (6) feet tall above grade; and concrete or masonry retaining walls or fences over four (4) feet tall measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall or fence.

2. What types of projects or construction work is exempt from a building permit?

A list of [work exempt from building permits](#) can be found on the City's website.

3. Even if my proposed fence is exempt from a building permit, are there other fence requirements I should be aware of?

Yes, a list of restrictions and the [fence ordinance](#) can be found on the City's website.

Current Codes

1. What are the currently adopted building codes?

Lawrence adopts international model building, fire and trade (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) codes by reference, with some local amendments. The City codes adopting these [international model codes](#) by reference, along with locally adopted general administrative provisions, can be found on the City's website. Copies of the referenced international model codes can be viewed in the Development Services office or at the main local library at 707 Vermont St.

Owner/Occupant Building Permits

1. Who qualifies as an Owner/Occupant?

A homeowner who personally occupies, or will occupy, and undertakes the construction, alteration, repair, or maintenance of such homeowner's single-family residence or an accessory structure thereto.

2. Can an Owner/Occupant apply for and obtain a building permit for construction work on their own home or property?

An Owner/Occupant of a single-family dwelling can apply for and obtain their own building permit with a completed [One & Two-Family Dwelling Permit Application](#) and a completed [Owner/Occupant form](#). Forms can also be obtained by calling or visiting the Development Services office.

3. Who does not qualify as an Owner/Occupant?

Property owners wishing to perform their own work on rental property, a family member's property at a different address, or vacant houses or properties where the property owner has no intention of residing in the house once the work is complete.

Building Permit Project Valuation – Permit Fees

1. What is my project valuation?

Most building permit fees are based on project valuation. An applicant for a permit shall provide an actual or a reasonable, estimated value at time of application. Permit valuations shall include total value of work, including materials and labor, for which the permit is being issued, such as electrical, gas, mechanical, plumbing equipment and permanent systems. The value to be used in computing the building permit and building plan review fees shall be the total value of all construction work for which the permit is issued as well as all finish work, painting, roofing, electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, elevators, fire-extinguishing systems and any other permanent equipment.

2. How can I see what my fee will be?

A [fee schedule](#) is available on the City's website.

3. How much are plan review fees? Do they apply to my project?

The plan review fee will be equal to 20% of the building permit fee and in addition to the building permit fee (building permit fees are not being increased). The plan review fee will NOT be charged on building permits for one or two-family projects or for multifamily or commercial "MEP" permits (mechanical, electrical or plumbing work only).

Residential One- and Two-Family Project Most Common Questions

1. What permit application do I use?

The [Residential One- and Two-Family Dwelling permit application](#) can be found on the City's website and is used for all residential projects.

What are accessory structure requirements?

Exemptions: One-story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 200 square feet

Typical Submittal Docs: Plot plan, framing, floor plan, footing details

2. What plans do I need for basement finishes?

Typical Submittal Docs: Floor plan, written scope, manual J report

3. What plans do I need for remodels?

Typical Submittal Docs: Floor plan, written scope

4. What plans do I need for additions?

Typical Submittal Docs: Plot plan, floor plan, footing/foundation details, framing details, manual J, ERI report

5. What are sidewalk and/or driveway requirements?

The City of Lawrence Public Works Department is responsible for the inspection and permit process on residential driveways. Information on residential driveway [permits, details, and requirements](#) can be found on the City's website or by calling (785) 832-3123. For information on sidewalk repair or replacement, please contact the Public Works Department at (785) 832-3123.

6. Do I Need a Permit for My Roof?

Definition: Shingle replacement (recovering allowed on existing roof with less than two layers) does not require a building permit.

The City of Lawrence does require a license to replace shingles, however, please check the [State of Kansas Roofing Registration Regulations](#) for more information.

7. Work Exempt from Permits:

A list of [work exempt from building permits](#) can be found on the City's website.

What is The Typical Review Period?

5 business days or less.

Commercial Project Most Common Questions (Projects Other Than Residential One- and Two-Family)

1. What application do I need for a commercial project?

The [Commercial Building Permit application](#) can be found on the City's website and is used for all non-one- and two- family dwelling projects.

2. What is the Statement of Special Inspections form?

A completed statement of special inspection shall be submitted for review and approval with all commercial building permit applications. If it is determined by the Design professional or applicant that no special inspections are required this should be indicated on the form and submitted. Special inspection reports,

including final acceptance reports, must be completed and submitted to the Building Safety Division prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. The [SSI form](#) can be found on the City's website.

3. My plans are too big to email:

The City of Lawrence requires 1 set of electronic plans. Electronic media is accepted in the form of disk, USB flash drive, PDF sent via email, or the City's dropbox site. For instructions on how to upload plans to the dropbox, please contact Development Services at (785) 832-7700, option 2.

4. What can I do on Citizen's Access?

Check your permit status, schedule inspections, view inspection details. To set up a Citizen's Access account, please contact (785) 832-7700, option 2 or email buildinginspections@lawrenceks.org for instructions.

5. What size plans and how many copies do I need to submit?

Commercial building plans, submittals and specifications shall be stamped and sealed by an architect or engineer licensed by the State of Kansas. Remodel projects of very limited scope or complex will not require professional design. Architectural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing plans shall be a minimum of 1/8" scale. All submittals shall consist of 2 stamped hard sets and one electronic copy. Construction documents shall be of sufficient clarity to identify new, remodeled, and existing portions of all rooms and spaces and the extent of the work proposed. Plans shall indicate the location of all exit signs and emergency lighting.

6. What is the typical review period?

15 business days or less.

Contractor Licensing

1. Where can I search for licensed contractors?

Search our [database of contractors](#) currently licensed by the City of Lawrence to provide building construction services.

How do I apply for a contractor license?

To apply, a signed, notarized, and completed [Contractor License application](#) must be submitted along with a current certificate of insurance listing the City of Lawrence as the certificate holder (see page 4 of application for details) and an accepted qualifying document (see cover page of application for details).

2. What is acceptable testing? For Class A, B, C, or D Licenses:

Obtain a certificate of competence (75% or higher) from a nationally-recognized testing institution as contemplated by K.S.A. 12-1556 or hold a bachelor's degree in engineering, architecture, or construction science from an accredited college or university.

For Class E Licenses: Obtain a certificate of competence (75% or higher) from a nationally-recognized testing institution as contemplated by K.S.A. 12-1508 (Plumbing Contractor), K.S.A. 12-1525 (Electrical Contractor), and K.S.A. 12-1541 (heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Contractor). The initial license fee is \$130.00.

3. How do I change my business name or qualifying party on my license?

Pages 1 – 3 of the contractor license application are required to be completed in order to change the Qualifying Individual on the license, in addition to the qualifying documents (exam score or degree). The fee to change the Qualifying Party is \$65.00. Page 1 of the contractor license application is required, along with an updated certificate of insurance listing the City of Lawrence as the certificate holder, to change the business name of the license. There is no fee for a business name change.

4. How do I renew my contractor license?

The Qualifying Party for a contractor license must obtain at least eight (8) hours of related continuing education annually, which meet the City's criteria for approval. Online classes are not accepted for continuing education purposes to license renewal. A current certificate of insurance listing the City of Lawrence as the certificate holder is required. The renewal fee is \$65.00.

5. What are the jobsite guidelines?

[Jobsite license guidelines](#) for contractors can be found on the City's website. Workers performing labor within the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical trades are required to be licensed, as follows:

1. At least one journeyman licensed worker is required to be on the jobsite at all times work in the respective trade is being performed.
2. One (1) journeyman licensed worker may directly supervise two (2) unlicensed workers.
3. The ratio of one (1) licensed worker to two (2) unlicensed workers shall be maintained at all times.
4. Licensed workers supervising unlicensed workers shall be on the jobsite.

Trades Licensing

1. How do I apply for a master or journeyman license?

A completed [Trades Licensing Application](#) will need to be completed and returned along with a certificate of competence from an approved testing institution and a photo ID.

2. How do I get sponsored for the Prometric exam?

The City of Lawrence has a standard [Tradesperson Licensing/Exam Sponsorship Application](#) that must be submitted to the City of Lawrence for review and approval, along with a \$50 fee, payable to the City of Lawrence.

*Testing by ICC for a trade certification does NOT require sponsorship by a Kansas jurisdiction, such as Lawrence, to sit for an exam.

*Prometric exams: Testing by Prometric requires that the candidate be sponsored by a local Kansas jurisdiction, such as the City of Lawrence, to sit for an exam. The City of Lawrence has a standard Tradesperson Licensing/Exam Sponsorship Application that must be submitted to the City of Lawrence for review and approval, along with a \$50 fee, payable to the City of Lawrence.

3. How do I renew my trades license?

Licensed tradespersons must obtain at least six (6) hours of continuing trade education annually, which meet the City's criteria for approval. Online classes are not accepted for continuing education purposes to license renewal. The renewal fee is \$10.00.

4. What are the license rules on the jobsite?

[Jobsite license guidelines](#) for trades can be found on the City's website. Workers performing labor within the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical trades are required to be licensed, as follows:

1. At least one journeyman licensed worker is required to be on the jobsite at all times work in the respective trade is being performed.
2. One (1) journeyman licensed worker may directly supervise two (2) unlicensed workers.
3. The ratio of one (1) licensed worker to two (2) unlicensed workers shall be maintained at all times.
4. Licensed workers supervising unlicensed workers shall be on the jobsite.

Inspections

1. How will I know what types of building permit inspections are required and when they are required?

When the approved building permit is issued, the permit applicant will be provided with a job inspection card listing the types of inspections that will be required for the project. Information will also be provided about when inspection should be scheduled.

2. How do I schedule an inspection?

There are 3 ways to schedule an inspection:

1. With your permit number, dial (785) 832-7710. The Inspection Hotline will walk you through scheduling an inspection for the next business day. This is a 24-hour service.
2. With your Citizen's Access account. This is a 24-hour service.

3. Call (785) 832-7700, option 2, to speak with Development Services between 8am – 5pm.

3. Can I choose a time for the inspection?

Inspections are preformed between approximately 9am – 11am and then from 1pm to 4pm, Monday through Friday. You can request AM or PM when scheduling your inspection through Citizen's Access or by calling Development Services staff. If you schedule your inspection through the Inspection Hotline, you would need to leave a voice message for the inspector with any special instructions. Be sure to follow all of the prompts when leaving a message. You will be required to accept your message before it saves.

4. What is a Will Call inspection?

Footing, Foundation Wall, Sewer, and Concrete Slab inspections are automatically scheduled as will call inspections. Will call inspections must be scheduled in advance and require a call to notify inspectors when a project is ready for inspection. Inspectors will arrive within 25 minutes of notification if during inspection hours. Calls after 11am will be inspected early afternoon. No inspectors will be sent out after 4pm.

***Inspections do not roll over to the following day.**

How to close your permit – Getting a CO

1. How does my permit close?

Once all of the required inspections have been approved the permit will automatically close.

2. How do I get a CO?

Except for minor remodeling projects, a Certificate of Occupancy (or Temporary Certificate of Occupancy) is also required prior to occupancy of any reconfigured or substantially altered/remodeled commercial building or building space, and for any change in the Building Code use/occupancy classification of an existing commercial building or building space ("Change of Occupancy"). A Certificate of Occupancy is generally not required for one and two-family residential alteration, remodeling or repair projects.

a. For One- And Two-Family Dwellings: Final Building Inspection approval by the Building Safety Division (BSD) is required before use occupancy is allowed for any new one- or two-family dwelling.

b. For Commercial: Before scheduling the final City building inspection for issuance of a TCO or CO, the GC should ensure that all required final City trade (Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, or MEP), final required City Fire inspections (emergency egress, fire suppression systems, fire alarm systems) and required site plan inspections (including City Stormwater Division inspections and City Utility Department inspections, if applicable) have been previously scheduled, completed and approved.

Demo Permits

1. When do I need a demolition permit?

A demolition permit is required when an entire structure is being completely demolished. Partial demolition would be included on a One- & Two-Family Dwelling Permit Application or Commercial Building Permit Application.

2. How much is a demo permit?

\$100.00

3. How do I get my demo permit?

There is a 30-day public comment period before any demolition work can begin. Expiration of the public comment period, along with verification from gas, electric, and water utility providers that services have been retired is necessary before a permit will be issued. This application must be signed by the record owner(s) and any contract purchaser(s).

Roof Work Information

1. Do I need a permit to replace my roof?

Roof replacements do not require a building permit or inspection if the scope of work meets both of these requirements:

- a) No structural changes or replacements (i.e. rafters, joists, decking, etc.)
- b) New roof material overlay is not attached to existing roof-support system (i.e. Metal roof)

2. Does my roofer need to be licensed?

Although the City of Lawrence does not require a Lawrence roofer license, the Kansas Roofing Registration Act was enacted by the Kansas Legislature and signed by the Governor on April 22, 2013. Under the provisions of this law, on and after July 1, 2013, every "roofing contractor" must obtain a roofing contractor registration certificate from the Kansas Attorney General in order to legally provide commercial or residential roofing services for a fee in Kansas.

3. How can I check to see if my roofer is properly registered with the State of Kansas?

The City of Lawrence does require a license to replace shingles, however, please check the [State of Kansas Roofing Registration Regulations](#) for more information.

Records Request

1. Where is the Record Request Form?

The [Records Request Form](#) can be found on the City's website or by calling the City Clerk's Office at (785) 832-3201.

2. Types of request and fees involved:

The Kansas Open Records Act allows public agencies to charge fees for providing access to or copying public records. In some cases, the requested records are readily available to the records custodian and no fees will be charged. If the fee to search for and/or copy the records is estimated to be more than \$10, you will be notified before the search for the records is undertaken. The City of Lawrence has three business days to respond to a request for records.

3. How do I get records?

Email the completed Records Request Form to Cityclerk@lawrenceks.org or mail to City Clerk's Office, 6 East 6th St, Lawrence, 66044