

Town of Gorham

Frequently Asked Questions – Building Permits & Construction

1. Why do I need a building permit?

Both NH State Law and the Town of Gorham require that a building permit be obtained. The purposes for permits include:

- a. Provide for public safety for both current and future occupants of the structure;
- b. Provide a mechanism of fair property tax assessment;
- c. Assure that construction complies with all applicable minimum Zoning and Building Standards.

2. Where can I get an application form?

Application forms can be obtained at the Gorham Town Hall, Main Office or on-line at www.gorhamnh.org.

3. How much does a permit cost?

The current Fee Schedule can be obtained at the Gorham Town Hall Main Office or on line at www.gorhamnh.org and is payable when the application is submitted.

4. What is the Building Permit process?

- a. Applicant to review standards applicable to the project.
- b. Submit a completed application (*short or full*) with all required plans and sketches to the Town Hall Main Office for processing.
- c. Gorham Code Compliance Officer will review the application for compliance to zoning and other local and State ordinances. (*Note: if the plan involves a project other than a single family home it will be subjected to either an abbreviated or full site plan review by the Planning Board*).
- d. Gorham Code Compliance Officer will review the application and take the following action:
 - i. if the application involves anything other than a single-family home, he will either approve the application or request the applicant contact him for clarification. After that, the application will be sent to the Board of Selectmen for a “sign-off” and the Building Permit will be issued.
 - ii. the code compliance officer will review as above and advise the applicant that they may need to seek a variance or special exception from the zoning board. This action is started by a denial of the permit application.
 - iii. If the project involves a commercial or multi-family structure, the Code Compliance Officer will review the application
- e. Gorham Compliance Officer reviews all application for Sign Permits. If the application involves a sign replacement (exact same size and location) or a face replacement (exact same size) then the action may be taken immediately to approve the application. If the application involves a new

sign then the Site Plan Committee will review the application and either mark it for approval or send it on to the Planning Board for a full review.

5. How long does it take to obtain a building permit? How far ahead of my project should I apply for the permit?

Permits are usually available within 7 to 10 business days from the application submission. State law provides up to 30 days for review. Applicants are notified of incomplete applications. Projects that have been reviewed within the 30-day time frame and require further action by other boards (Planning and or Zoning) may require further time prior to the issuance of a permit.

6. Can I start the project before having the permit?

No! You are required to “post” the permit at the site prior to the start of the project and it must be available to the Compliance Officer to sign during all inspections.

7. What are the consequences of not having a building permit?

If you begin construction without a permit, the Code Compliance Officer will issue a “Stop Work Order”. You will then be required to apply for permits and pay an additional fee of \$25.00 for your project. If your project is a commercial or multi-family the additional fee is \$100.00. If approved, a permit will be issued and you may be required to uncover any work that has not been inspected. In some cases, regulations and codes may not permit the type of construction that has been done. In this case, you may be required to replace or restore the area to its original condition prior to construction. It is obvious that you should make sure you have all of your permits before starting. It is the owner of the property that has the responsibility for insuring that all permits have been obtained not the contractor or subs.

8. Do building and sign permits expire?

Yes! Permits expire after 1 year. You are entitled to one additional extension without a fee. If over 1 year has elapsed then you must file a completely new application.

9. What happens if my building permit application is denied?

Denials are issued in writing with the basis of the denial provided. Every attempt will be made to advise you on how to correct the reason for denial.

Your options may include:

- Applying to the Zoning Board of adjustment for a variance or special exception.
- Applying to the Zoning Board of Adjustment

10. Assistance in filling out the forms.

You may contact the Main Office at the Gorham Town Hall for assistance in filling out any of the required forms.

11. If I am renovating an existing structure do I need a permit?

Yes! If the work is structural (not painting, paper, new carpeting, etc.)

12. If I am replacing all or a portion of an existing structure, do I need a permit?

Yes, the work is considered structural.

13. Do “temporary” buildings or buildings without a foundation require a permit?

All structures require a permit even if they are “temporary” use (winter shelter, etc.) or are constructed in a “temporary” manner (no foundation, etc.)

14. **Can I do my own plumbing, new or repair/replacement, and do I need a permit?**
A permit is required. By State law a property owner or the property owner's agent may install, repair, or replace plumbing in the property owner's own single family home. All work must still comply with applicable plumbing codes. A separate Plumbing Permit can be obtained for plumbing-only project. There is no fee for this type of permit.
15. **Can I do my own electrical, new or repair/replacement, and do I need a permit?**
A permit is required. By State law a homeowner may make electrical installations in or about a single-family residence occupied by him/her or to be occupied by him/her as his or her bona fide personal abode (not a multi-family home). All work must still comply with applicable electrical codes. A separate Electrical Permit can be obtained for an electric-only project. There is no fee for this type of permit.
16. **If I am increasing or decreasing the size of an existing structure, porch, deck, etc. do I need a permit?**
Yes.
17. **Do I need a permit for a "prefab" shed, gazebo, or other structure, which is delivered to my property and not built on site?**
Yes.
18. **Do I need a permit for a tarp or canvas covered structure?**
Yes. These are considered "membrane structures" and do require a permit in the same manner as all other structures.
19. **Do I need a permit for an in-ground or above-ground pool?**
Yes, both in-ground and above-ground pools require a permit.
20. **Do I need a permit for a fence?**
Yes. Fences require a permit and are not required to meet minimum setback requirements. (Note: If the property borders a State of NH Controlled Right-of-Way then permission must be obtained from the NH Department of Transportation) If the fence is 6' or taller it is considered a structure and must meet the minimum setback requirements for the property zone.
21. **Do I need a permit for a new or renovated sign?**
Yes. All sign types are regulated. Permits are necessary to erect a sign, change the face, size, or location of a sign, or to add or change the lighting for a sign. Sign Permit applications are available on line at www.gorhamnh.org or you may pick one up at the Town Hall Main Office.
22. **Do I need a permit for a Home Occupation?**
Home Occupations require review by the Code Compliance Officer. Please contact The Main Office at the Gorham Town Hall for an appointment. 466-3322.
23. **Is a permit necessary for the "Change of Use" of a structure or property?**
Yes. A permit is required to change the use of a property:
- to/from a dwelling
 - by increasing/decreasing the number of dwelling units
 - from a residential use to a non-residential use
 - from one non-residential use to another