

Building Permit Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

City of Bishop – Building Department

General Questions

Q: What is a building permit?

A: A building permit is an official approval from the City of Bishop that allows you to start construction, repair, or remodeling work. Permits make sure that the work meets building codes, safety standards, and local regulations.

There are different types of permits depending on the type of work, such as:

- Building (for structures and remodels)
- Electrical
- Plumbing
- Mechanical (heating and ventilation)

All permits must be applied for online. Some projects also require you to upload plans for review. If you're not sure what you need, we're happy to help:

 **Call us:** 760-873-8458

 **Email:** publicworks@cityofbishop.ca.gov

Q: Why do I need a building permit?

A: Permits help regulate safety and establish minimum standards for construction in our homes, businesses, and community. They also protect your investment by ensuring work is code-compliant, inspected, and legally documented.

Q: When do I need a building permit?

A: Permits are required for most construction, remodeling, or demolition projects, including decks, roofing, water heaters, electrical upgrades, and structural changes. For details, visit our [When Is a Permit Required?](#) guide, which also explains when permits are **not** required.

Q: Who can obtain a permit?

A: Building permits may be issued to the **property owner**, their **authorized agent**, or an **appropriately licensed contractor**. Contractors must hold an active license with the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) and have a valid City of Bishop business license.

You can verify contractor licensing at: www.cslb.ca.gov

Q: Do contractors need a City business license?

A: Yes. All contractors working within City limits must have a current City of Bishop business license in addition to a valid California contractor's license.

Q: What building code does the City of Bishop enforce?

A: We enforce the [2022 California Building Standards Code \(Title 24\)](#), which became effective January 1, 2023.

Permit Application Process

Q: How do I apply for a permit?

A: All permits must be submitted through our [Online Permit Portal](#). Paper plans are no longer accepted.

Q: Can homeowners apply for permits themselves?

A: Yes. If the property is owner-occupied, you may apply for a permit as an "owner-builder." You must acknowledge the legal responsibilities involved.

Q: How long is my application valid?

A: Applications are valid for **180 days**. If no progress is made, the application may expire unless an extension is requested in writing.

Q: What happens if I don't start work after my permit is issued?

A: Your permit will **expire after 180 days** if work hasn't begun or if work is halted for more than 180 days. Contact us to request an extension.

 Plans & Submittals

Q: What format should my plans be in?

A: All construction documents must be uploaded in **PDF format** and **separated by discipline** (e.g., architectural, structural, electrical, plumbing, mechanical).

Q: What plans do I need to submit?

A: Depending on your project, you may need a site plan, floor plan, elevations, structural calcs, Title 24 compliance, and more. See our [Permit Submittal Checklist \(PDF\)](#) for full details.

Q: Do I need engineered drawings?

A: Structural plans are typically required for new buildings, additions, or modifications affecting load-bearing elements. Some residential projects may be exempt.

 Inspections & Construction

Q: How do I schedule an inspection?

A: Inspections must be scheduled online through the permit portal. You can request either morning or afternoon. You will receive confirmation of the scheduled date and an approximate time window.

Q: What types of inspections will I need?

A: Common inspections include, but are not limited to:

- Foundation and footing
- Framing and rough trades (electrical/plumbing/mechanical)
- Insulation and drywall
- Final inspection

Q: What if I fail an inspection?

A: You'll be notified of the correction items, and a re-inspection can be scheduled after the issues are resolved. (Reinspection fee may be applied.)

 Code Violations & Unpermitted Work

Q: What happens if I do work without a permit?

A: Unpermitted work is a code violation and may result in a stop work order, fines, or the need to remove the unpermitted work. You may also be required to apply for a "retroactive" permit and expose completed work for inspection.

Q: I received a code violation notice—what do I do?

A: Contact the Building Department. Staff will explain what needs to be corrected and whether a permit is required. Prompt resolution can help avoid penalties or further enforcement.

Q: Can I report suspected unpermitted construction?

A: Yes. Please call our office at 760-873-8458. All reports are confidential.

Fees & Payments

Q: How much does a permit cost?

A: Fees vary by project scope. The online portal will calculate fees during the application process. A current fee schedule is available [here](#).

Q: Can I pay online?

A: Yes. You can pay permit fees securely through the portal once your application has been reviewed.

Handyman & Unlicensed Contractor Rules

Q: Can I hire a handyman to do work on my property?

A: In California, you can hire a handyman **only for minor work where the total cost is under \$500**, including labor and materials. This is known as the \$500 exemption, as outlined in Business & Professions Code § 7048.

Q: What types of work can a handyman legally do?

A: A handyman (unlicensed contractor) may:

- Perform basic repairs and maintenance (e.g., painting, minor drywall patching, installing shelves, screen doors)
- Replace fixtures like faucets, handles, or basic appliances
- Take on jobs where the **total value does not exceed \$500**, including labor and materials

Q: What are unlicensed contractors prohibited from doing?

Unlicensed individuals may **not**:

- Work on projects exceeding **\$500** in total value
- Split up or “break apart” jobs to stay under the \$500 limit
- **Advertise** as a contractor or imply licensure
- **Pull permits** for building work (unless the property owner is acting as an owner-builder)
- Perform work that affects structural elements, electrical systems, plumbing, or roofing—these typically require a licensed professional and a permit

Q: Can a handyman do work that requires a permit?

A: **No**. Permitted work—such as structural changes, electrical upgrades, or plumbing modifications—must be done by a **licensed contractor** or a properly qualified **owner-builder**. The City of Bishop does **not issue permits to unlicensed contractors**.

Q: What if a handyman does work illegally?

A: Hiring an unlicensed person for work over \$500 or that requires a permit is a **violation of state law** and may result in:

- Code enforcement action
- Permit revocation or denial
- Fines or stop work orders
- Difficulty obtaining insurance or reselling the property

More Information:

[CSLB: What You Should Know Before Hiring a Contractor \(link to PDF document\)](#)

[CSLB License Check Tool](#)

Still Need Help?



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