



## 1&2 Family Dwellings - FAQ

City of Bristol  
Economic & Community  
Development Code Enforcement  
Division  
104 Eighth St  
P.O. Box 1189  
Bristol, TN 37621  
Karl S. Cooler, CBO Codes Administrator  
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### When is a permit required?

- Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.  
*2012 International Residential Code, Section R105.1*

### What work is exempt from permitting?

- **Building**
  - 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.
  - Fences not over 7 feet high.
  - 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 (earth or fill behind the wall).
  - 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.
  - Sidewalks and driveways.
  - Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
  - Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
  - Swings and other playground equipment.
  - Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
  - Decks not exceeding 200 square feet in area, that are not more than 30 inches above grade at any point, are not attached to a dwelling, and do not serve the required exit door
- **Electrical**
  - Listed cord-and-plug connected temporary decorative lighting.
  - Reinstallation of attachment plug receptacles but not the outlets therefor.
  - Replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location.
  - Electrical wiring, devices, appliances, apparatus or equipment operating at less than 25 volts and not capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.
  - Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
- **Gas**
  - Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliances.
  - Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
  - Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.
- **Mechanical**
  - Portable heating appliances.
  - Portable ventilation appliances.
  - Portable cooling units.
  - Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
  - Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.
  - Portable evaporative coolers.
  - Self-contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.



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### Who gets the permit?

The owner of a property who desires to do work or have work done that requires a permit is responsible for the permit. TCA 13-7-211 requires the Code Enforcement Division to know if a contractor is involved so we can obtain proof of his liability and workers compensation insurance. The owner is required to sign an affidavit stating whether the owner or a contractor will do the work. If a contractor is involved the permit cannot be issued until the contractor provides proof of insurance or shows he is exempt from workers compensation insurance. Even though the owner is responsible for ensuring the permit is obtained, it is recommended that the contractor be required to obtain the permit.

**THE PERMIT IS REQUIRED TO BE OBTAINED BEFORE WORK BEGINS ALWAYS ASK TO SEE A COPY OF THE PERMIT !**

### How many permits are required?

Until recently, the City of Bristol only issued separate permits for each trade that was to be done (building, electrical, plumbing, hvac, etc.). We now have the ability to issue a combination permit for projects where multiple trade work is being performed. For a combination permit to be issued, there has to be building trade work being performed and at least one other mechanical trade. If no building trade work is to be done, separate mechanical trade permits are still required.

### Does my contractor have to be licensed?

When selecting a contractor, it's important to use caution - whether you are considering hiring a contractor for home improvement, remodeling or new construction. If you make sure the contractor you hire is licensed, insured and reputable, you'll avoid a lot of problems. In Tennessee, building contractors do not have to have a state license until the cost of the job reaches \$25,000 (labor & materials). Electricians, plumbers and hvac contractors must have a minimum of a limited state license for projects up to \$25,000 (labor & materials) in value. Once these projects reach \$25,000, a state contractor's license is required.

### What do I need to submit to obtain a permit?

- To obtain a permit, the applicant must first file an application in writing on a form furnished by the Code Enforcement Division for that purpose. The application must be complete; any incomplete applications cannot be processed
- Identify and describe the work to be covered by the permit for which application is made.
- State the valuation of the proposed work.
- If this is new construction or an addition, a site or plot plans drawn to scale showing the location of the proposed structure and all other structures on site are REQUIRED. Show all setbacks and easements and indicate distances to all property lines and easements from the proposed building. **Plans may be submitted electronically - contact our office for details.**
- 1 set of building plans drawn to scale with sufficient detail & clarity to indicate the nature & extent of the work proposed. Single-Family Residential plans are not required to be sealed by a design professional, however, some elements of the construction may be required to be designed and sealed by a design professional registered in the State of Tennessee.
- If this is a new building, provide receipt for water & sewer services when applicable.
- Floodplain Elevation Certificate, if in Special Flood Hazard Area.
- Be signed by the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent.



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If a subdivision or combination of property is involved, obtain a copy of the City of Bristol's Subdivision Brochure for information on this process.

### What code do I have to follow for residential construction?

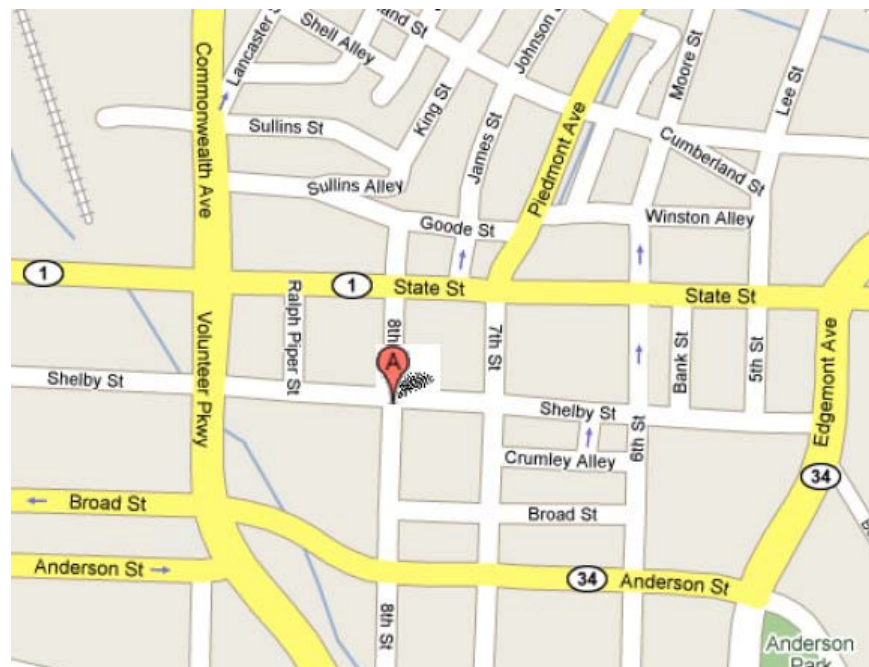
Construction for 1&2 family dwellings and townhouses must follow the requirements of the 2012 International Residential Code. This code is copyrighted by the International Code Council and is not available for viewing on-line. A free version is available for the public at: <http://publicecodes.cyberregs.com/icod/> or you can come in to the Code Enforcement office and review a copy. Check your local public library; they usually carry copies of technical building codes.

### Can I get started and then come in for my permit?

No, the code requires that an application be made in writing for a permit prior to the commencement of work. Most jurisdictions, including the City of Bristol, have a penalty built in to their permits fees for starting work without first obtaining the permit. The City of Bristol fee schedule indicates that your permit fee will be double if you don't obtain your permit first. When the permit is issued to you, you will also be issued an orange permit placard card that must be posted and visible from a public street at all times while the construction is proceeding.

### Where do I go and who do I see to obtain my permit?

The Code Enforcement Division offices are located in the City of Bristol's Easley Municipal Annex building at 104 8<sup>th</sup> St, Bristol, Tennessee. This office is located 1 block east of Volunteer Parkway and 1 block south of State Street in downtown Bristol. A map is shown below for reference.



There is a reception desk in the center of the building and you should ask to be directed to the permit office. This office is available for permit issuance from 8:00am until 5:00 pm daily. In the unlikely event that no one is available in the permit office, one of the attendants at the front desk can help you start the application process.



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### Code Enforcement Division

#### General Information Related to Permits, Applications & Inspections.

**(423) 989-5709**

#### What inspections are required and how do I obtain them?

Every permit issued requires at least one inspection, most will require more than one. When you obtain your permit, be sure that you make sure that you know what inspections are required for your particular permit. It is the duty of the permit holder or their agent to notify the building official that such work is ready for inspection. It shall be the duty of the person requesting any inspections required by this code to provide access to and means for inspection of such work. Work shall not proceed beyond the point indicated in each successive inspection without first obtaining the approval of the building official. The building official upon notification shall make the requested inspections and shall either indicate the portion of the construction that is satisfactory as completed, or shall notify the permit holder or an agent of the permit holder that the work fails to comply with the code. Any portions that do not comply shall be corrected and such portion shall not be covered or concealed until authorized by the building official.

#### 6 Steps To Selecting A Contractor ?

1. **Ask to see the contractor's license and write down the number.**
  - a. A pocket card is provided to all licensed contractors by the Contractor's Licensing Board of Tennessee.
  - b. Check with the board to verify the validity and current status of the contractor's license.
2. **Get recommendations from friends and neighbors.**
  - a. Use a local well-established contractor. Ask the contractor to give you references, and then call the references, ask questions and look at their work.
3. **Ask the contractor if the company is insured against claims covering worker's compensation, property damage and general liability.**
4. **Get all estimates in writing.**
  - a. Estimates should be very specific and should include exactly what you're getting for the price. Make sure all bids are based on the same set of specifications and include a completion date. Get a written contract for all work and do not allow the contractor to split the bid into separate parts.
5. **Be sure to see the building permit before work starts, and make sure it's not in your name.**
  - a. Never obtain the building permit yourself for work done by a contractor. Doing so, you assume all risks and it will be difficult for you to recoup money for inferior work.
6. **Never pay for more work than is actually completed.**
  - a. Never pay more than one-third down.
  - b. Some of the most frequent complaints involve unscrupulous contractors who take advance payments and then disappear before finishing or even starting the work.

**If you have questions, contact the Tennessee Board for Licensing Contractors at:**

**1-800-544-7693 or 615-741-8307 or check the license lookup website at:**

<http://licsrch.state.tn.us/>

If the work was not completed according to the terms of the contract, the property owner has the option to pursue legal action against the contractor. You can also file a Consumer Complaint with the Tennessee Contractor's Licensing Board at 1-800-544-7693.

More information on the complaint process can be found at:

<http://tennessee.gov/commerce/boards/contractors/complaint.html>