

# How to Apply for a Permit to Replace the Windows in My House

## Do I really need a permit to change the windows in my house?



Whether you need a permit or not depends on the actual extent of the work which will be involved. Replacement of windows can be as simple as replacing the existing windows with "inserts" that are installed directly in the existing frame of the old window. With this type of a replacement, no structural alterations or removal of the sash is involved. A permit is **not** required for this type of window replacement. However, you need to be aware that in the replacement of windows, you must still comply with regulations related to safety glazing and emergency egress. These topics will be explained later in this pamphlet.

A permit **will** be required if the replacement of your windows involves the removal of the existing wood or metal sashes, or if alterations are made to the existing opening.

## How do I apply for a permit to replace my windows?



Submit an application to the Building Inspection Section of the Development Review Center. This application will ask you to describe the work you propose.

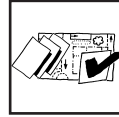
Along with the application, you must provide a floor plan which will show the location of the windows which will be replaced. The floor plan must identify the rooms within the dwelling (e.g. Bedroom, kitchen, bath, living room, etc.). Dimensions of each window being replaced must also be provided. When indicating the size of the windows, the width is always indicated first and the

height second. Example: 3' x 4' indicates the window will be three feet wide and four feet tall.

If you are replacing a window with a door, you must provide a switch operated light at this new exit. The light and switch must also be shown on your floor plan. Information indicating conductor type, size and branch circuit over current protection must also be provided.

When structural changes are involved, such as enlarging or reducing an opening you will be required to provide framing details of how you will accomplish this work.

## Is there any planning (zoning) review?



If you are replacing windows that require a permit, your application will be reviewed by Planning. If your project is located within a Design Review District (Emerald Lake Hills, Palomar Park, or Devonshire and Coastal Areas), Planning staff will review the project to determine if a review by the Design Review Committee is required or if a staff level exemption or approval can be processed.

Minor window replacement, or alterations are generally exempt from Design Review, provided the style and design of the window matches that of the surrounding windows and is compatible with the house design (non-anodized aluminum windows are prohibited). However, you should check with planning staff to determine if your project qualifies for an exemption and to receive any forms which may be necessary.

## What types of permits will I need?



A building permit will be required for the replacement of windows. If electrical work will be involved an electrical permit will also be required.

In areas subject to Design Review, you will be required to obtain a Design Review permit from the Planning Section.

## What fees must I pay?



Building permit fees for this type of work are based upon the valuation of the work. Valuation includes the cost of materials and the cost of labor involved.

Regardless of whether you are doing the work yourself, reasonable labor costs must be included in your valuation. If minor electrical work is involved, a minimum electrical fee will be required.

Other fees include, a filing fee, a micro filming fee, a plan checking fee (when structural review is required) and Planning Fees if applicable.

## What code requirements should I be aware of?



- ✓ **UBC Section 2406** - Requires that glazing (windows) located in areas that are subject to human impact must be safety glazed. These areas include glazing in doors, glazing located within a 24-inch arc of either a vertical edge of a door, or within tub and shower enclosures.
- ✓ **UBC Section 310.4** - Windows located within sleeping rooms are required to meet egress requirements. If you are replacing a window which is subject to obtaining a permit, you will be required to make the new window comply with the Uniform Building Code requirements for egress windows. This requirement is as follows:  
All escape or rescue windows shall have a minimum net clear openable area of 5.7 square feet. The minimum net clear openable height dimension shall be 24 inches. The minimum net clear openable width shall be 20 inches. When windows are provided as a means of escape or rescue they shall have a finished sill height not more than 44 inches above the floor.

**NOTE:** If you are replacing windows which are not subject to a building permit, as previously described, you need to be aware that the replacement window cannot reduce the existing opening which previously existed in a room designed for sleeping purposes.

That is, the openable portion of the window must be the same or greater than the existing window.

- ✓ **UBC Section 310.9.1.2** - When the valuation of an addition, alteration or repair exceeds \$1,000.00, smoke detectors shall be installed in each sleeping room and at a point centrally located in corridor or hallways giving access to the sleeping areas. Multiple story or split level structures will require smoke detectors on each level.

### How long will it take for my permit to be issued?



Applications for permits for window replacements are generally reviewed and plan checked by the Building Inspectors when they have office time. If an inspector is available in the office, you may receive your permit on the same day that you apply. If an inspector is not available, approval of your application may take several days.

If you are located in a Design Review District and it is determined that your project is exempt, Planning approval may come immediately or, in an administrative approval, a couple of weeks.

### At what point should I call for an inspection?



- ✓ An inspection of your project must be made before any framing or electrical is concealed.
- ✓ The installation of the window must be reviewed by the inspector to determine if the window has been installed, flashed and caulked correctly.
- ✓ Inspection of new wall coverings (sheetrock, siding, stucco wire) must be conducted before nailing has been concealed or stucco applied.
- ✓ A final inspection is required after the work has been completed and smoke detectors installed.

### What is the first step in this process?



Read the pamphlet **General Procedures When You Apply for a Planning or Building Permit**. This pamphlet explains the general procedures for applying for a permit, paying fees, calling for inspections and other related matters. Then you should review the following documents which contains other information which you may need:

How to Apply for Design Review

### Glossary

The following are abbreviations and symbols commonly used when preparing plans for this type of work.

- SLGD = Sliding Glass Door
- SLD = Sliding Window
- DH = Double Hung Window
- SH = Single Hung Window
- CSW = Casement Window
- AW = Awning Window
- FXW = Fixed Window (Not operable)
- DR = Door
- \$ = Light Switch
- ⊕ = Electrical Outlet

PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE



San Mateo County  
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