


Memorandum

To: All State Agencies

Date: September 6, 2019

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From: WENDY COLLINS, Assistant Deputy Director 
Office of the State Fire Marshal, Fire and Life Safety Division
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Subject: **PROJECT ELEMENTS THAT CAN BE STARTED AHEAD OF OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL PERMITTING**

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify when plans and specifications for construction projects are required to be submitted to the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) for review, approval, and construction inspections.

Building/Fire permits are written authorizations issued by the State Fire Marshal to construct a project. The authority to issue such permits are found in the California Health and Safety Code (HSC). HSC Section 13108 as well as 13146 state in part, that the California State Fire Marshal shall enforce such building standards and other regulations adopted by them. Authorization is required for most construction or remodeling projects, to ensure the safety of the work and its compliance with building, construction, and fire codes.

However, not all construction requires a permit from the Fire and Life Safety Division. In some cases, elements associated with construction projects may be able to begin ahead of receiving approval from the OSFM. Whether your project requires a permit depends upon regulations set forth in the California Building and Fire Codes. Projects that are most likely to require a permit, are those that change the structure, use of a building or have the potential to create unsafe conditions.

Projects that will require a permit prior to proceeding would include but not limited to:

1. New building or structures
2. Additions to a building or structure
3. Access for fire apparatus
4. Automatic fire-extinguishing systems
5. Battery systems
6. Boilers
7. Compressed gases
8. Cryogenic fluids
9. Demolition
10. Emergency responder radio coverage system (DAS)
11. Fire alarm and detection systems and related equipment
12. Fire pumps and related equipment
13. Flammable and combustible liquids
14. Hazardous materials
15. Industrial ovens
16. Land development, Subdivisions
17. Liquid propane gas

18. Medical gas systems
19. Modular building placements
20. Parking structures
21. Private fire hydrants
22. Refrigeration equipment
23. Smoke control
24. Solar photovoltaic power systems
25. Spraying or dipping flammable finishes
26. Standpipe systems
27. Telecom infrastructure improvements/replacements (intra-building, inter-building, telecom appurtenances and huts)
28. Temporary membrane structures and tents
29. Water supply for fire protection

Limited construction elements that will be allowed to proceed at risk concurrently with the OSFM plan review and permitting process would include:

1. Construction Elements
 - a. Earthwork
 - i. Site work and site utility (except fire water) plans
 - ii. Cast piles
 - iii. Concrete pile caps
 - b. Concrete
 - i. Foundations, piers, and grade beams
 - ii. Slabs on grade and suspended slabs
 - iii. Structural: columns and beams
 - iv. Civil abutments and retaining walls
 - c. Structural Steel
 - i. Superstructure, columns and beams
 1. Except for steel fire proofing
 - ii. Pan Deck
 - iii. Excludes stairs that part of egress

Projects that usually would not require a review or permit from this office would include:

1. Fencing make ready, site clearance
 - a. May not interfere with building exiting or egress, fire access or required yards or exit courts
 - b. Not over 7 feet (2134 mm) high
2. Freestanding pedestrian bridges
 - a. Site bridges, not connected to buildings
 - b. Shall not affect building egress
3. Freestanding vehicular bridges
 - a. Per Caltrans standards
 - b. Excludes fire access roads
4. In kind roof repairs or replacements less than 50%
 - a. Exception: requiring Class A roofing resulting from location in high fire severity areas.

5. In-kind replacements of mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) elements
 - a. Air handlers
 - b. VAV units
 - c. Chillers
 - d. Ductwork
 - i. Exception: fire and smoke fire dampers etc.
6. Parking lots
 - a. Grading and base
 - b. Paving
 - c. Curb and gutter
 - d. Lighting
7. Marine construction
 - a. Piers, supporting ramps abutments, and appurtenances
8. New open-air construction.
 - a. Athletics fields
 - b. Decking
 - c. Fencing
 - d. Dugouts
 - e. Signage
 - f. Lighting
 - g. Tracks: new and re-surfacing
 - h. Turf: synthetic or natural
 - i. Swimming pools (not associated with buildings)
 - j. Field lighting
9. Fixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters not over 5 feet 9 inches (1753 mm) in height.
10. One-story detached accessory structures provided the floor area is not greater than 120 square feet.
 - a. Used as tool and storage sheds
 - b. Playhouses and similar uses
11. Replacement in kind, repairs and maintenance: As required: on a routine and reoccurring basis; to bring facility back to a fully functional state; for preservation and upkeep.
 - a. Painting
 - b. Drywall repairs (non-fire rated)
 - c. Flooring
 - d. Hot water heaters (smaller than 100 gallons)
 - e. Window replacement (non-fire rated)
 - f. Window shading devices: window screens, films applied to glazing, other shading devices that do not require additional support
 - g. Energy Management Systems
 - h. Door and door hardware (non-fire rated or panic hardware)
12. Roadway
 - a. Grading
 - b. Paving
 - c. Lighting (non-egress required elimination to the public way)
13. Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet (1219 mm) in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding Class I, II or IIIA liquids

14. Signage not related to egress, evacuation or hazard areas (interior and exterior)
15. Site work hard-scape and soft-scape
16. Landscaping
17. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems (not used for Assembly Occupancies).
18. Walkway / sidewalks
19. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work
 - a. Excludes combustible veneers (wood) applied to walls and ceilings
20. Electrical: Repairs and maintenance: Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of
21. Approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles
22. Electrical equipment used in radio and television transmitting stations
23. Electrical equipment used for radio and television transmission

All work shall be verified and completed by licensed professionals. All work performed shall be subject to Deputy State Fire Marshal field approval for completeness of work and code compliance. Any work found to be deficient, shall be corrected before Certificate of Occupancy can be granted by the OSFM.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact the Fire and Life Safety Division at 916 568-2957.