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Why do I Need a Permit to Build a Deck?

Spring and summer months are a good time to consider building, repairing, or replacing a deck. The first and most important of our deck building tips is to always get a permit.

According to a recent study, 90% of the people building decks do not get a permit. Permits and inspections are very important, whether you are building the deck yourself or having a contractor do it. Obtaining a permit comes with great benefits to ensure a safe quality deck is built.

I'm sure you have seen news reports covering decks that have collapsed causing injury, property damage or worse. Many of these incidents could have been avoided if permits and inspections had been obtained.

How do I obtain a Deck permit?

First, you or your contractor will make an application for the deck permit and submit a drawing of the proposed deck. By following the rules and going through the process, you:

- Will have a plan review of your deck by a certified plans examiner
- The plans examiner will make all life safety checks for code compliance before a permit is issued
- Once plans have passed the review process, a permit will be issued, and inspections will be made by certified inspectors. This will help to protect the safety of your home and family.

What does the Building Department look for during a plan review of a deck?

1. Footing depths and sizes: Are the footings deep enough and large enough to support the proposed deck? And will they stay put during winter frosts?
2. Post Sizes: Are the proposed post supports large enough to support the structure and the intended loads?
3. Beams, Joist sizes and spans: Will the joist and beam sizes span the distance with adequate support for the load?

4. House Attachment: Will the methods shown on the plans to tie the deck to the house be adequate, or do you need a freestanding deck? Stairs and guardrails: Do they meet the parameters for life safety?

These are the type requirements your city building department will review. Remember, the building code is meant to serve in your best interest. Nobody wants to build a deck that is substandard or will need to be torn down or repaired in the near future.

Inspections:

Part of your deck building permit fee includes inspections, usually a footing inspection and a final inspection. The inspector will check the footing depths before you pour them and inspect framing after everything is complete. Other decks may have electrical inspections and roof inspections as well, when you obtain your permit the list of inspections will be provided on your permit by the plan reviewer.

Always use your city inspectors as a source of information, while inspectors cannot design or advise you on how to build the deck, they can keep you informed on code compliant means to build your deck to keep it safe for you and your family for years to come.

Find more information on decks on the [city's website](#) under [Building & Permitting](#) or call the Building Department at City Hall, 678-691-1200.

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