

1. **Why do I need a permit?**

Permits ensure that construction within our municipality meets with standards set out in the Michigan Building Code. Your home/business renovation project must meet basic requirements for health, safety, energy, and structural soundness. Beyond this, the permit process makes sure that your plans are in line with zoning regulations and other building designations.

2. **What does the Community Development Department do?**

The Community Development Department manages zoning, planning, building permits, housing, property maintenance, and rental properties with the City of Sturgis. Whether you are building something new, opening a business, or fixing up a property, we are here to help you through the process. Our office is open to the public, Monday - Friday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., or you can contact us at 269-659-7230 with questions. Our office is located at:

City Hall – City of Sturgis
130 N Nottawa St
Sturgis MI 49091

3. **What is a building permit?**

A building permit is a document which grants legal permission to start the construction or alteration of a building or other structure in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

4. **What happens if I don't get a permit?**

If you carry out a renovation project that requires a permit without having one, City of Sturgis Building Department representatives may issue a "Stop Work" and or a "Cease and Desist" order, which remains in effect until you obtain a permit. The fee for Building Without a Permit is \$250.00. Additionally, a citation may also be issued which would require you to pay additional fines and additional time spent with the court. If the work doesn't meet the requirements of the Building Code, you may well have to redo the work at your own cost.

Section 23a of the state construction codes act of 1972, Act. No. 230 of Public Acts of 1972, being section 125, 1523a of the Michigan Compiled Laws, prohibits a person from conspiring to circumvent the licensing requirements of this state relating to persons who perform work on residential building or a residential structure. Violations of section 23a are subjected to civil fines. The property owner may be subject to legal action for failure to obtain a permit

In addition, work performed without a required building permit may hold up the sale of your property in the future and may also affect an insurance claim. Before any work begins on your home, check with Community Development Department to ensure you are obtaining the appropriate permits and approvals.

5. **When do I need a permit?**

Permits are required for most building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical projects. The Michigan Building Code states "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 a required permit."

In general, a permit is required for any new building, any addition to an existing building, and any alterations to an existing building which effects: the design of the building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems, and changes in the use or occupancy of buildings or parts thereof.

Below you will find a list of typical projects that require a permit:

- Additions, interior alterations, finishing a basement or a portion thereof which includes the removal of drywall or paneling to install new wall coverings.
- All decks, porches and three season rooms.
- All pools that are capable to hold 24 inches or more of water and hot tubs.
- Attached or detached garages and portable sheds.
- Automatic fire alarms.
- Repairs or replacement to the plumbing, heating and electrical systems. This includes replacement of water heaters and furnaces.
- Fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, chimneys and gas inserts.
- Generators.
- Installation of sanitary, water service and irrigation systems.
- All roofing projects.
- Removing and or replacing of siding/exterior building materials.
- Replacement windows.
- Fences, which include removal and installation of new fences in the same location.
- Temporary structures

Some projects may not require a permit as required by the Michigan Building Code but they require a permit based on the City of Sturgis Zoning Ordinance. So, anything regulated in the zoning ordinance requires a permit in the City. Some examples:

- Driveways: new and all alterations
- Portable sheds of any size
- Chicken Coops
- Donation bins
- All signs whether temporary or permanent

6. **What are the permit costs?**

For information, please view the **FEE SCHEDULE** at the Community Development website.

7. **How long does it take to get a permit?**

Most residential permits take from 3-5 business days if a plans review is not required. If a plans review is required, it may take 2-3 weeks for permit issuance. Commercial projects timeline for permits varies, as there may be additional approvals necessary. Contact the Community Development Department.

8. **Do I need to hire a licensed builder or a licensed maintenance and alterations contractor?**

If the costs of the project are more than \$600 which includes MATERIALS and LABOR, a licensed builder or licensed maintenance and alteration contractor. Even if the work is being completed for free but the project material costs is greater than \$600 a licensed person must be completing the work.

9. What if you are the homeowner and want to complete the work yourself?

A homeowner can complete the work, but you must meet the following conditions:

- The work being requested is on your principal residency or will be your principal residency.
- You as the homeowner are completing all the work.

10. Who should get the permit – homeowner or the contractor?

As the homeowner, you are legally responsible to ensure that a permit is obtained when required. Your contractor or designer may apply for the permit, but the homeowner should ensure that a permit has been issued prior to any work starting.

This also applies to making sure the required inspections are completed. If your contractor completes work without requesting and being approved for the required inspections, the project will be stopped and any work that has been concealed will need to be removed to allow for the appropriate inspections.

11. How do I choose a contractor?

Here are some things to consider when choosing a contractor:

- Verify that the contractor is properly licensed in the trade that you are requesting. All residential builders, maintenance and alterations contractors, electricians, plumbers, and mechanical (HVAC) are required to be licensed, you can verify a license by going to the State of Michigan's website here, [Verify Contractor License](#)
- Check for the contractor's experience in the type of construction proposed.
- Interview the contractor and check his references.
- Check the reliability of your chosen contractor with the Better Business Bureau.
- Arrange a contract and ensure the contract covers all the work including your design professional drawings and who arranges for inspections.
- Before signing the contract, check the drawings to ensure they comply with what you want.
- Check specifications and materials proposed with your Design Professional and Contractor.
- Confirm the type of warranty that is being given, and, on a large contract, you may wish to obtain legal counsel before signing.
- Confirm whether the contractor is obtaining their required permit or if you are expected to handle the building permit. When the contractor is applying for the permit, make sure you see the permit before allowing work to start.

12. What paperwork do I need to get a permit?

The specific requirements depend on the type of work you are planning. For simple interior projects, a scale floor plan will often be adequate. For larger projects involving additions, decks or major structural renovations, a full set of working drawings and a site survey map may be required. The Community Development Department can tell you exactly what's needed.

13. How do I request an inspection?

For inspections on property within the City of Sturgis, call the Community Development office at 269-659-7230 at least 24 hours ahead of time to request scheduling of an inspection. If you have an electrical, plumbing or mechanical permit, the inspector's contact information will be listed on your permit.

14. Why is an inspection and permit necessary for replacement of water heaters and furnaces?

An inspection is performed to ensure that water heaters and furnaces are properly installed, and to help determine and avoid any potential safety hazards that could result from improper installation.

15. I live outside the City of Sturgis limits and have a building-related problem/question, can the City of Sturgis help me with this?

The City of Sturgis does not have jurisdiction over building issues outside of its city limits. If you live outside the city and have a building-related issue you should contact your local municipality or township. If you are unsure, please contact our office and we can try to assist you with the appropriate person to contact.

16. Where can I order State of Michigan code books for building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing work?

The Michigan Building Code (Commercial Projects), Michigan Plumbing Code; Michigan Mechanical Code, Michigan Electric Code; and Michigan Residential Code (1 and 2 Family Dwellings), and other pertinent documentation related to building projects, can be purchased from the State of Michigan by contacting the following department:

Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth
Bureau of Construction Codes and Fire Safety
P.O. Box 30255
Lansing, MI 48909

Please visit the State of Michigan website for further information.

17. I am working around my gas, electric meter or any other underground utilities, what do I do?

Contact MISSDIG by dialing 811 or online at www.missdig811.org.

Damages without a MISS DIG ticket is a huge concern. In 2024, natural gas distribution systems in the State of Michigan reported 4,078 excavation damages. Of these, 1,216 damages (30%) occurred where the excavating party did not contact MISS DIG prior to completing their work.

The City of Sturgis recommends you contact for all digging or excavation activities. Michigan law, Public Act 174, requires an excavator to have a MISS DIG ticket when doing mechanical excavation. Federal regulations require a ticket for all types of excavation, including with hand tools, no exemptions.

MCL 460.723(m) states in part that:

"Excavation" means moving, removing, or otherwise displacing earth, rock, or other material below existing surface grade with power tools or power equipment, including, but not limited to,

grading, trenching, tiling, digging, drilling, boring, augering, tunneling, scraping, cable or pipe plowing, and pile driving; and wrecking, razing, rending, moving, or removing a structure or mass of materials.

49 CFR 196.3 states in part that:

“excavation refers to excavation activities as defined in §192.614, and covers all excavation activity involving both mechanized and non-mechanized equipment, including hand tools.”

So not to disturb any of your utilities which can cause serious delays or injuries, you should contact MISSDIG to mark the underground utilities. If utilities are struck during excavation activities it could cause many hours to make the repair, the utility service will be unable to be utilized until corrected, it could cost money to make the repair or someone can be injured.

There are 5 steps to SAFE digging:

1. Contact MISS DIG 811 by phone or online.
2. Wait 3 business days for lines to be marked.
3. Check job status online prior to digging.
4. Hand dig if working within 4 feet of paint or flags.
5. Dig with care.