Permit Exemptions
Type: All Construction
Subtype: RESIDENTIAL/ NON-RESIDENTIAL
Revised: 01.2025

City of Tukwila - Permit Center
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www.tukwilawa.gov/departments/permit-center/

Permit Exemptions

Construction codes include a very narrowly defined list of items exempt from permitting. If it is not included on the narrowly defined list of exemptions, then a permit for the work is required. Here is a breakdown of what activity does not require a permit. Tukwila has detailed handouts for clarification for many of these items.

Section 105.2 of the International Building Codes states: Exemptions from permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of this code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.

Even if a permit isn't required, your project must still meet minimum code standards as well as setbacks, height limits and Zoning Code use standards. The Building Official will deem it unsafe if those standards aren't followed.

Applicable Regulations:

- Title 11 Tukwila Municipal Code
- Title 16 Tukwila Municipal Code
- Title 18 Tukwila Municipal Code
- WAC 19.27 State Building Code
- WAC 296-46B-901 (7) Electrical
- Washington State Building Code Council

Resources:

- Tukwila Permit Center
- Public Works Infrastructure Design and Construction Standards

When emergency replacement and repairs must be performed in an emergency situation, the permit application shall be submitted the next business day.

Language shown in *italics* in this document reference specific words or phrases defined by their respective International Building Codes.

RESIDENTIAL

Authority; Building Official: 2021 IRC 105.2 - Amended by 16.04 TMC

2021 International Residential Code Building:

1. One-*story* detached *accessory structures* used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet, and such structure is outside of and entirely separated, as prescribed by Code, from any existing building on the premises. (Amended by TMC 16.04.020)
2. Fences not over 6 feet high. (Amended by TMC 16.04.020)
3. 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. (See Retaining Wall Doc)
4. 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.
5. Sidewalks and driveways. (PW *permit*s required for ADA and impervious, only exempt from building *permit*s)
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
7. Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep.
8. Swings and other playground *equipment*. (Not for public use)
9. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
10. Decks not exceeding 200 square feet (18.58 m2) 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 exit door required by Section R311.4.

Permit Exemptions

Mechanical & Gas:

1. Portable heating *appliances*, Portable ventilation *appliances*, Portable cooling units, Portable evaporative coolers and Portable-fuel-cell *appliances* that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.
2. Steam, hot- or chilled-water piping within any heating or cooling *equipment* regulated by this code.
3. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of *equipment* or make such *equipment* unsafe.
4. Self-contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.

Plumbing:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe; provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drainpipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a *permit* shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.
2. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures, and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures.

NON-RESIDENTIAL

Authority; Building Official: 2021 IBC, IMC, IFGC, UPC Amended by 16.04 TMC

2021 International Building Code

1. Work performed by the City of Tukwila and located in City of Tukwila right-of-way.
2. Work performed by Washington State Department of Transportation and located in WSDOT right-of-way to include public utility towers and poles, mechanical *equipment* not specifically regulated in this code, hydraulic flood control structures including levees; provided that any structure or building constructed in a municipal or state right-of-way and intended to be used as any occupancy classification of the State Building Code is not exempt from the related *permit* requirements.
3. One-story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided that the floor area is not greater than 120 square feet, and such structure is outside of and entirely separated, as prescribed by Code, from any existing building on the premises. (Amended by TMC 16.04.020)
4. Fences not over 6 feet high. (Amended by TMC 16.04.020)
5. 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 or impounding Class I, II or IIIA liquids.(See Retaining Wall Doc)
6. Water tanks supported directly on *grade* if the capacity is not greater than 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width is not greater than 2:1.
7. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent *grade*, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an accessible route. (PW *permit*s required for ADA and impervious, only exempt from building *permit*s)
8. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
9. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.
10. Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 24 inches, are not greater than 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.
11. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems.
12. Window awnings in Group R-3 and U occupancies, supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
13. Nonfixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5’-9” in height.

Permit Exemptions

2021 Uniform Plumbing Code

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe; provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drainpipe, water, soil, waste, or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a *permit* shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.
2. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures, and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures.

2021 International Mechanical Code

1. Portable heating *appliances*, portable ventilation *appliances*, portable cooling units, portable evaporative coolers and Portable-fuel-cell *appliances* that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid.
2. Steam, hot- or chilled-water piping within any heating or cooling *equipment* regulated by this code.
3. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of *equipment* or make such *equipment* unsafe.
4. Self-contained refrigeration systems containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.

2021 International Fuel Gas Code

1. Portable heating *appliances*.
2. Replacement of any minor component of an *appliance* or *equipment* that does not alter approval of such *appliance* or equipment or make such *appliance* or *equipment* unsafe.

ELECTRICAL RESIDENTIAL & NON-RESIDENTIAL

Authority; Building Official: WAC 296-46B-901 (7), TMC 16.04

The only electrical work that is exempt from permit involves replacing minor components of the electrical system with identical ones.

EXAMPLE: Swapping out light bulbs, switches, or smoke detectors with the same type or devices.

PUBLIC WORKS RELATED

Authority; Public Works Director: TMC 11.20 Right-of-way vegetation

11.20.030 Permit Exemptions

1. Owners or occupants of abutting property may maintain such property, other than plant replacement, without obtaining a permit.
2. The City and its employees, agents and representatives may perform such work without obtaining a permit.