

Minimum Requirements for a California Mechanical Building Permit

Summary

This document lists the minimum requirements in California for issuance of a building permit, and compares those permit requirements with what is required on the CF-1R compliance form to determine any commonalities. The example used was mechanical permits for existing buildings.

Identifying these minimum requirements can be used to establish baseline criteria upon which an online permitting framework can be built.

Finalized: April 19, 2017

Use of this document

This document clearly lists the minimum requirements required for issuance of any building permit as codified by law, using the example of a mechanical permit for an existing building. This information can be used by any building jurisdiction updating/revising permit applications, but it is primarily intended to inform the development process for a common statewide permitting platform. Level setting stakeholders on these minimum requirements is the first step to ensure consistency across local jurisdictions and help address the barriers impacting compliance rates.

This is part of a series of deliverables from the WHPA Compliance Committee and its Working Groups to support improved compliance

This document is based on an official [WHPA Work Product](#) of April 19, 2017 titled “Minimum Legal Requirements for a Building Permit Memo” and was developed by the WHPA Compliance Committee’s Minimum Legal Requirements for a Building Permit Working Group.

This document, and also the WHPA Work Product, may be used in part or whole at no charge. Attribution to the Western HVAC Performance Alliance is requested.

We would also ask that you inform the WHPA through info@performancealliance.org if you have made use of either document, so that we can inform and encourage the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time to providing expert HVAC advice in order to support energy efficiency objectives.

Background

California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan

The issue of permitting and code compliance for Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems has been the subject of discussion within the regulatory policy arena for many years. The California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) originally released in 2008 (and updated in 2011) identified that “less than 10 percent of HVAC systems obtain legally required pre-installation local building permits.”¹ The Strategic Plan established specific goals to facilitate the “consistent and effective compliance, enforcement, and verification of HVAC-related building and appliance standards”. One of these goals was to streamline the local government permitting system. This document is one of many deliverables from the WHPA Compliance Committee to support these goals.

Goals of the WHPA Compliance Committee

The Western HVAC Performance Alliance (WHPA) Executive Committee approved three goals for the WHPA Compliance Committee for 2016 and 2017. They all focused on achieving consistent and effective compliance, enforcement, and verification of applicable building and appliance standards.

This activity is in support of Compliance Committee Goal 1-1: Develop streamlined local government HVAC permitting systems, including on-line HVAC replacement permitting. The development of this deliverable will improve understanding of the minimum requirements for any building permit.

Benefits of the Deliverable

The inconsistency of information requested by building departments for a mechanical permit was identified as one of several barriers preventing higher permit compliance rates. Creating a standard baseline that can be used across the state can address this barrier. This deliverable describes the minimum requirements for mechanical permits in order to assist in preparing a scope for an online permitting system.

“Minimum Legal Requirements for a Building Permit Memo”

The “Minimum Legal Requirements for a Building Permit Working Group” was established to identify the minimum requirements that must be included in a building permit. For this project, the Working Group focused on mechanical permits for existing buildings. Identification of these minimum requirements can be used to establish baseline criteria upon which an online permitting framework can be built.

The Working Group used the following reference materials to complete its efforts:

- Assembly Bill No. 2335, Chapter 66
- Title 24, Part 2, Volume 1 of the California Building Code Chapter 1, Division II, Part 1
- The California Business and Professions Code Chapter 9

¹ California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan, January 2011, page 54.

Assembly Bill 2335 clearly outlines the minimum requirements for a building permit which are listed in Table 1. These items are required throughout California regardless of the jurisdiction.

Table 1: Minimum Legal Requirements for Building Permit

BUILDING PROJECT IDENTIFICATION		
Applicant's Mailing Address		
Property Location or Address		
Property Owner's Name		
Property Owner's Telephone Number		
Licensed Design Professional (Architect or Engineer) in charge of the Project (<i>as applicable</i>)		
Mailing Address of the licensed Design Professional (<i>as applicable</i>)		
LICENSED CONTRACTOR'S DECLARATION	or ²	OWNER-BUILDER DECLARATION
License Class		Date
License Number		Signature of Property Owner or Authorized Agent
Date		
Contractor Signature		
WORKER'S COMPENSATION DECLARATION (<i>as applicable</i>³)		
Policy Number		
Expiration Date		
Name of Agent		
Phone Number		
Signature of Applicant		
Date		
DECLARATION REGARDING CONSTRUCTION LENDING AGENCY (<i>as applicable</i>)		

² Either the Licensed Contractor or Owner-Builder Declaration must be completed in their entirety depending on who is completing the permit application.

³ For items listed "as applicable" all information listed under that section is required if the section is applicable.

Lender's Name
Lender's Address
Signature of Property Owner or Authorized Agent
Date
AUTHORIZATION OF AGENT TO ACT ON PROPERTY OWNER'S BEHALF (<i>as applicable</i>)
Description of work
Project Location or Address
Name of Authorized Agent
Address of Authorized Agent
Phone Number of Authorized Agent
Property Owner's Signature
Date

Through the course of this project, Energy staff⁴ contacted 105 building departments in 26 different counties in the State of California in order to get an understanding of additional requirements that may be needed at the time of an application for a mechanical permit. In general, mechanical permits follow the minimum legal requirements, but also include additional requirements as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Additional Optional Requirements for Mechanical Permit

CF-1R form
Copy of the sales contract
Site plan
Duct layout
Sound calculations for condenser
Equipment model numbers or specification sheet
Site photos
Signed homeowner authorization
Structural calculations
Manual J calculation

These requirements are not mandatory and vary by jurisdiction. Appendix A provides the details of the survey of the 105 building departments. While some of the requirements shown in Table 2 are not required by all building departments, it was found that for all 105 building departments, a CF-1R form was required for a mechanical permit to be issued.

This prompted a deeper review into the CF-1R requirements and a comparison of the CF-1R against the minimum requirements from Table 1 to determine where there are commonalities and differences. The results of this comparison are included in Appendix B.

The difference between individual jurisdictions lies in the additional requirements that they elect to include above the minimum requirements. Most of these additional requirements could be included as part of an online permitting system and uploaded as required by the jurisdiction at the time of the online application.

The CF-1R is required by all building departments researched. There are many similarities between the CF-1R and the building permit. Adding the property owner's name, mailing address, telephone number, as well the declaration statements to the CF-1R would align both the CF-1R and the building permit. This could avoid duplication and enable electronic information transfer from a registry to a building permit application.

Appendix A – Additional Requirements for a Mechanical Permit (based on a survey of 105 building departments in 26 California counties)

		Yes			No
Online Permitting	Apply Only	Apply and Pay	Full Issuance		68
	1	1	35		
CF1R requirement	Registered	Hand Written	Not Required		0
	79	26	0		

Additional Requirements

Copy of Sales Contract	2			103
Equipment Model #s or Spec Sheet	73			32
Site Plan	Add On Only	Replacement and Add On	Roof Mount Only	46
	8	50	1	
Decibel Specs for Condenser	6			99
Structural Calculations (roof or attic)	25			80
Duct Layout	1			104
Signed Home Owner Authorization	15			90
Manual J	2			103
On Site Photos	1			104

Comparison of a Building Permit Application and a CF-1R

Reference: Assembly Bill 2335, Passed the Assembly 6/23/2008, Passed the Senate 6/19/2008

BUILDING PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

	Permit		CF-1R		
	Optional*	Required	Optional	Required	Not Required
Applicant's Mailing Address		x			x
Property Location or Address		x		x	
Property Owner's Name		x	x		
Property Owner's Telephone Number		x			x
Licensed Design Professional (Architect or Engineer) in charge of the Project (if applicable)	x			x	
Mailing Address of the licensed Design Professional (if applicable)	x			x	

DECLARATIONS ⁵	LICENSED CONTRACTOR		Required if No Owner-Builder			
	License Class	x			x	
	License Number	x			x	
	Date	x			x	
	Contractor Signature	x			x	
	OWNER-BUILDER		Required if No Licensed Contractor			
	Date	x			x	
Signature of Property Owner or Authorized Agent	x			x		

WORKER'S COMPENSATION DECLARATION (if applicable)

Policy Number	x				x
Expiration Date	x				x
Name of Agent	x				x
Phone Number	x				x
Signature of Applicant	x				x
Date	x				x

⁵ Either the Licensed Contractor or Owner-Builder Declaration is required depending on which entity is completing the permit application.

DECLARATION REGARDING CONSTRUCTION LENDING AGENCY (if applicable)

Lender's Name	X				X
Lender's Address	X				X
Signature of Property Owner or Authorized Agent	X				X
Date	X				X

AUTHORIZATION OF AGENT TO ACT ON PROPERTY

Description of Work	X				X
Project Location or Address	X				X
Name of Authorized Agent	X				X
Address of Authorized Agent	X				X
Phone Number of Authorized Agent	X				X
Property Owner's Signature	X				X
Date	X				X

* Information is only required to be completed in the case of an affirmation. For example, if there is a Licensed Design Professional in charge of the project, this information will need to be added to the building permit application. If a particular section in the Table applies, then the information is required in its entirety and is no longer optional. For example, if a licensed contractor is applying for the permit, then all information listed under Licensed Contractor's Declaration is required.