

Chicago Municipal Code

13-32-020 Exceptions.

(a) If an existing residential building; (1) contains three or fewer dwelling units, and (2) does not exceed three stories in height, and (3) is not a mixed occupancy building, a permit shall not be required for any work involving minor repairs to such building, including, but not limited to, the replacement in-kind of windows, doors, shingle roofing on 5-in-12 slopes or steeper, siding, hot water heaters, furnaces, air conditioning condensers, boilers, and bricks, when the number of bricks replaced or repaired is less than 250 bricks. Provided, however, that this section shall not apply, and a permit shall be required, if the work being done on such an existing residential building involves changes in the materials of roofs, windows or exterior walls visible from a public street of properties designated as Chicago Landmarks in accordance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 2-120 of this code. For purposes of this subsection, the term “replacement in-kind” means the replacement of existing materials, objects or elements using new materials, objects or elements of the same type, size and shape, without reconfiguring the space.

(b) A permit shall not be required for work in any building, regardless of the building’s occupancy, if the work consists of the repair or replacement of (1) interior non-fire-rated doors; (2) interior non-fire-rated ceiling tiles only (alteration of the supports or grid requires a permit); (3) floor finishes, such as carpeting, hardwood or tiles; (4) wall finishes, such as paint, wallpaper or tile; (5) cabinetry or furniture without plumbing or electrical connections; (6) portable appliances, such as a coffee maker, stove, refrigeration display case or similar object, if such appliance: (i) is not a hard-wired appliance; and (ii) connects to its power source using a plug; and (iii) is not regulated by the City of Chicago’s department of the environment; (7) at-grade noncombustible patios or walkways; (8) landscaping, such as: (i) plant landscaping; (ii) any landscaping element that does not require plumbing or electrical service; and (iii) playground equipment; and (9) any other repairs deemed to be minor repairs by the building commissioner in duly promulgated rules. Provided, however, that no work or operation shall be deemed by the building commissioner to consist of minor repairs to a building, if the work or operation (i) involves sandblasting; or (ii) involves the replacement or repair of any structural load-bearing members; or (iii) reduces the means of exit; or (iv) affects the light, ventilation, room size, or sanitary or fire-resistive requirements of the building or any portion thereof; or (v) involves the use of materials not permitted by the building and environmental control provisions of this Code; or (vi) involves changes in the materials of roofs, windows or exterior walls visible from a public street of properties designated as Chicago landmarks in accordance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 2-120 of this Code; or (vii) changes the height, area, or capacity of the building.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code, if the commissioner determines that the repair, replacement, alteration or construction of the following without a building permit will not endanger the public, the commissioner may, in rules and regulations, exempt the following from the requirement of obtaining a building permit:

- (1) the alteration of interior stairs;

(2) the alteration or installation of low voltage electrical fixtures, including but not limited to, telephones, speakers, burglar alarms, doorbells, thermostats, computer lines;

(3) the construction or alteration of a gazebo having a surface area of 150 square feet or less. For purposes of this subsection, a “gazebo” means an at-grade free standing detached structure: (i) with a roof and 4 or more sides that are open; provided that the sides may be enclosed for decorative purposes no more than 4 feet above the floor of the gazebo; (ii) that does not contain any sleeping facilities, a kitchen, a bathroom or water service; and (iii) that is an accessory structure, as that term is defined in section 17-17-0205 of this code;

(4) the construction or alteration of a shed, as that term is defined in section 13-96-390 of this code, having a surface area of 70 square feet or less; or

(5) drywall repair or replacement of less than 1000 square feet without any alteration of any underlying electrical devices or systems.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed as waiving any other applicable provision* the municipal code and any alteration, construction, repair, replacement, or minor repair authorized without a building permit pursuant to this section shall comply with all other applicable provisions.

* Editor’s note – As set forth in Coun. J. 12-2-09, p. 78837, Art. 9, § 1. Correct text is probably “applicable provision of the municipal code.”

(Prior code § 43-2; Amend Coun. J. 6-14-95, p. 2828; Amend Coun. J. 10-28-97, p. 54731; Amend Coun. J. 12-12-07, p. 17167, § 35; Amend Coun. J. 3-18-09, p. 56026, § 1; Amend Coun. J. 12-2--09, p. 78837, Art. 9, § 1)