

Mono County Community Development Department

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Building Division

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS MOUNTAIN VIEW FIRE RECOVERY

Contact Information:

- **Tom Perry**, building official: 760-965-3635, cell 760-937-5939
- **Jim Shoffner**, building inspector: 760-924-1822
- **Jason Davenport**, building inspector: 760-932-5433
- **Mike Jones**, permit technician: 760-924-1825
- **April Sall**, planning analyst: 760-932-5423
- **Louis Molina**, environmental health director: 760-924-1845
- **Website:** <http://monocounty.ca.gov/building>
- **Inspection hotline:** 760-924-1827

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Does Mono County keep building plans on file for existing homes?

Yes, we often have digital files for existing structures, but not always. Most recent homes (i.e., from the mid- to late 1990s to the present) are usually on file with us, but not always. Older homes (pre-1990s) often do not have plans available. Contact Mike Jones at 760-924-1825 for assistance with document requests.

2. Can a house be built on an existing foundation?

Applicants who wish to use the existing foundation system must have an evaluation of the foundation system performed by a California registered design professional as required by section 405 of the 2019 California Existing Building Code (CEBC). This analysis shall state that the registered design professional has visited the site and investigated the condition of the existing foundation with the specific finding that the damaged building, if repaired to its pre-damage state, would comply with the provisions of the California Building Code (CBC). The evaluation shall also indicate if the existing foundation can adequately support the proposed re-built structure, and that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use.

3. If I build on an existing foundation, what building codes apply?

Should an existing foundation successfully be evaluated and approved by a registered design professional as described in item 2 above, then the replacement of original materials and methods of construction is allowed per Section 17958.8 of the California Health and Safety Code (H&S) for repairs to existing buildings. Per this statute, the re-built structure must have complied with the codes that were in effect at the time of original construction. So long as the re-build does not continue or become a substandard building, then the codes that were in effect at the time of original construction may be applied. In order to do this, evidence of a Mono County building permit and County- approved plans for the original unit must be provided by the applicant to establish that the building met the codes in effect at the time when the building was first constructed. This will also help determine the exact build of the existing structure. Mono County permit technician Mike Jones would be the resource for those who want to see if plans are still on record with the County.

4. When a home is rebuilt, must it be built in compliance with current building codes?

Yes. If the building is not constructed on the existing foundation and re-built as described in items 2 and 3 above, the structure must be constructed according to current state building codes as it is no longer a repair, and is considered new construction. The state code in effect now is the 2019 California Residential Code (CRC) which applies to one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures. Buildings other than one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures must comply with the 2019 CBC.

5. Do I need a permit to re-construct a destroyed outbuilding that houses utilities?

The 2019 CBC and CRC will allow for an accessory structure to be built without a permit so long as the building's floor area is no more than 120 square feet, one story, detached from other buildings, and is used for utilities serving a primary dwelling. The primary dwelling cannot have utilities restored to it if the dwelling is damaged to a point that prohibits safe human occupancy. If the outbuilding is greater than 120 square feet in area, then a permit is required, including a detailed site plan and engineered construction documents.

6. How is the County determining the amount of square footage that was on my property?

The Building Division will rely on two sources of information: Existing building plans on file, and County Assessor data. However, the County will consider the square footages from formal documents, such as insurance papers or previous building permits.

PERMITS

7. Is a demolition permit required for removal of a building or portions of a building that were damaged or destroyed by the fire?

Yes, a demolition permit is required per current state code (the 2019 CRC, section R105.1, and the 2019 CBC, section 105.1). This would include badly damaged foundations and fire burned debris. These permits are typically an over-the-counter permit with associated fees waived, but could take up to a few days for processing given staff limitations and heavy workload. All applications for demolition will require Mono County Environmental Health's approval prior to the issuance of a building permit relative to state requirements for fire-related demolition operations. Contact Louis Molina at 760-924-1845 for more information and for specific state guidelines and standards for the proper demolition and disposal of fire burned debris.

8. Is a building permit required to repair damage to a structure?

Yes, a permit is required for repairs per current state code (the 2019 CRC, section R105.1, and the 2019 CBC, section 105.1). For buildings that were not totally destroyed and have minor damage (such as damaged deck joists and posts), the damaged members can be replaced on a like-for-like basis. These permit applications will be expedited similar to full re-builds and will be issued no later than three to five business days after the submittal, unless unusual circumstances are present. Engineering and building plans usually are not required for these types of minor repairs.

9. How long do I have to rebuild my permanent residence?

There is no timeline on when you have to rebuild. However, once issued, building permits are valid for three years, so long as progress is being made on construction and regular inspections (one every six months) are being scheduled and conducted by the Mono County Building Division. Additional extensions of time beyond three years are possible with a written request to the Building Official.

10. What documents are needed for a building permit submittal?

All required plans and documents required for a rebuild permit are identified on our building permit application, which is available on website at <http://monocounty.ca.gov/building>. A complete submittal and detailed building plans often translate into quicker review times. The site plan must also be detailed, as multiple departments and agencies are using the site plan for their reviews that must be completed prior to permit issuance. For buildings that will be re-built on a like for like basis on an existing foundation as described above in items 2 and 3, copies of the County approved plans will be required to be submitted in addition to the other submittal documents. All building permit submittals for fire re-builds will be expedited, with first review comments for building being issued in 5-7 business days excluding shipping time. Reviews and approvals from Mono County Planning, Public Works, and Environmental Health, in addition to special districts (such as local fire departments and utility districts) are needed prior to permit issuance.

11. Once I have all permit submittal documents ready, how do I submit them for the permit?

Submittals can be accepted and processed with a hard copy submittal, or with a digital submittal. Due to COVID-19 measures, the preferred method is to send by mail to: Michael Jones, P.O. Box 347, 1290 Tavern Road, STE 138, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Hard copy submittals can be accepted and processed at both the Bridgeport and Mammoth Lakes offices. Drop off and pick up bins are located at the front entries of both buildings. The Bridgeport office is located at 74 N. School Street (the Annex I building), and the Civic Center in Mammoth Lakes, located at 1290 Tavern Road. Building permit applications can be obtained at <https://monocounty.ca.gov/building/page/building-permit-applications-0>. Digital submittals must be submitted to: mjjones@mono.ca.gov. For all permit submittals, Mike Jones will be the primary staff contact for permit processing and issuance. Please contact Mike at mjjones@mono.ca.gov or at (760) 924-1825 for specific guidance on all submittals and the permit process.

12. What is needed for a minor electrical or utility permit to get power and utilities turned back on?

We will be able to quickly process permit applications for re-energizing damaged electrical equipment and other utilities if the primary dwelling is intact and OK for human habitation. These utility permits do not authorize any demolition and debris removal operations, and will not be issued for utilities to fire damaged buildings unsafe for human occupancy. Liberty Energy and other utility providers must receive authorization from Mono County in order to have utility service turned back on. Please complete and sign the over-the-counter permit application and submit it per item 12 above.

13. What are the County fees associated with permits?

Permit fees for the reconstruction and repair of structures that were damaged or destroyed are waived. This is applicable only for the property owners who experienced a loss due to the fire. This includes building permits, demolition permits, and associated electrical and utility permits. Additionally, fire district fees are waived for rebuilding structures destroyed by the fire.

14. What about school district fees?

Since school district fees are developer fees, these fees do not apply to the reconstruction of homes destroyed in the fire. This exemption would apply for the original square footage of the destroyed structure, plus a maximum of 500 additional square feet. However, if the rebuilt square footage of the new structure exceeds the original square footage plus the extra 500 square feet, then fees would apply to that additional square footage. Property owners will need to take an exemption form, which will be provided during the building permit process, to the school district office to request the exemption.

RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLERS

15. Are residential fire sprinklers required in reconstructed buildings that were destroyed in the fire?

Yes, residential fire sprinkler systems are required per the 2019 CRC, section R313 for new construction where the entire building, inclusive of the existing foundation, is demolished. For repairs of existing buildings reconstructed on an existing foundation as described in items 2 and 3 above, residential fire sprinklers would not be required if the original building's permit was applied for before January 1, 2011.

16. Are there legal exemptions that would allow omission of residential fire sprinkler systems for rebuilt structures?

No. County staff has contacted numerous state agencies and other jurisdictions in the state to research this topic, with the consistent and clear message that sprinklers may not be exempted for new construction. However, as indicated above in this document, a building may be repaired and reconstructed to the codes in effect at the time of original construction as per items 2 and 3 above. In addition, manufactured homes do not require residential fire sprinklers.

17. Who can assist with the plan preparation and installation of residential fire sprinklers?

There are a various designers and contractors who can perform these services. Please contact Building Division staff for contact information.

18. Do I need a licensed fire protection contractor to design and install the sprinkler system?

No, a fire sprinkler designer may do the design work and furnish plans, which can be used to submit to the Building Division that would allow flexibility with who would do the installation later in the building phase. However, a licensed C-16 fire protection contractor can prepare plans and do the installation, but often will require their client to use them for both the plans and installation.

19. What types of residential fire sprinkler systems are available?

There are two different types of sprinkler systems to select: An anti-freeze system, and a multi-purpose system. The anti-freeze system is the type that is isolated from the rest of the building's domestic plumbing, and provides freeze protection such that heat need not be maintained in the building. The multi-purpose system is a non-anti-freeze system connected to the building's domestic plumbing system and serves sprinkler heads similar to other plumbing fixtures. The multi-purpose system is generally less expensive than the anti-freeze system, and is suitable for primary homeowners, but requires the interior temperature of the building to be maintained at a level that will prevent the pipes from freezing.