Southwest
New Brunswick
Service Commission

Building permit Q&A

Q: Do I need a permit?
A: In most jurisdictions, simple repairs, roof replacements and re-siding of residential structures does not require a permit. Any renovations that affect the structure of a house, such as expanding windows, replacing bedroom windows, or adding to the square footage of a house, will require a permit, regardless of where you live. The same goes with new construction. Change of occupancy require a permit, and alteration of commercial buildings may - or may not - require a permit.

Accessory buildings

Effective January 1, 2023, any structure greater than 55 square metres (592 square feet) requires a building permit, except for camps. Camps (occupiable structures) are Code exempt if they have less than 58.06 square metres (625 square feet) of total floor area. (In other words, loft spaces are included in this calculation.)
All structures require development approval of some nature.
The best practice is to call your local planning office before you build/renovate/repair: for St. Stephen, St. George, Saint Andrews, McAdam, Fundy Shores and all un-incorporated areas, that's us, the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission's planning office, at 466-7369.

Q: OK, who do I call to find out if I need a permit?
A: For Grand Manan and Campobello, call your village/town office. For everywhere else, call the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission - that's us - at (506)-466-7369.

Q: My, er, friend, started building something without a permit. Now what?
A: First off, just to be on the safe side, tell your friend that it's best to pause construction. Then you, er, that is, your friend, should contact your local planning department. Again, for St. Stephen, Eastern Charlotte, Saint Andrews, McAdam, Fundy Shores and all non-incorporated areas , that's us. If there are no issues with where and what being constructed, we can, in most cases, process a permit application in a day or two and get people back to work.

Q: I want to use milled lumber. Can I?
A: We know the lumber produced by local mills is solid stuff, but the Canadian Building Code requires that construction use stamped lumber. That said, some buildings do not need to conform to Code. Under current provincial regulations, any small accessory buildings less than 55 square metres (592 square feet) and camps

(small dwellings < 625 square feet) does not have to meet Code - so milled lumber can be used in this situation. Also, if you're renovating an old home and need to replace some old timbers with milled product of the same size, we may be able to approve that. Ultimately, it's up to your local building inspector to make the call – ask permission first. If you are absolutely dead-set on using milled lumber in home or other structure under Code, then you need to have it graded by a licenced grader OR have the construction plans approved by a structural engineer licenced to work in the province.



Q: What does Code require for insulation?
A: For southern New Brunswick, R50 in attics, R17 effective in walls (fibreglass filling a 2x6 wall cavity will suffice), R26.5 in floors over unheated space or cathedral ceilings. Of course, a builder or homeowner can have more insulation. (And when it comes to cathedral ceilings, we strongly recommend it.) In any event, insulation is a wise investment that will pay off in the long run. Oh, and be sure to include space for ventilation in your rafters.

Q: I want to build on a concrete slab. That's OK, right?
A: *Maybe - maybe not*: residential homes (not minihomes) and some large garages may need engineered plans for a slab. In general, garages and small accessory structures can be built without a slab, or on a slab that does not require an engineer's set of drawings in rural areas. Minihomes can sometimes be placed on a contractor-built slab as long as they conform to a standard called Z240 MH - which most do. Once more, call your local planning office for specifics.

Q: What does a building inspector do, and why should I care?
A: Building inspectors will look at new construction (and significant renovations) to ensure building conforms to the current national building codes. They are trained to evaluate fire safety, structural safety, appropriate heating and ventilation, proper installation of smoke detectors/alarms, proper installation of carbon monoxide alarms (if needed) and much, much more. In simple terms, their job is to make sure that construction is safe for use.

Q: Does my new building need to be inspected?
A: If you have a building permit, you'll have received guidance on what needs inspections, and when. As a rule, new homes require three inspections: before backfilling foundations, before installing drywall, and before final occupancy.

Q: Who is responsible for inspections?
A: Ultimately, it's the property owner. That said, a good contractor/builder will take care of things. We require three inspections for new construction (sometimes more.) Your permit will tell you when to call us for an inspection.

Q: I'm just putting in a new business into an existing building. I don't need a permit, right?
A: Actually, you may. Provincial regulations specifically refer to changes of occupancy requiring a permit. That's because the building codes have different regulations for exits, fire safety and the like, based on what the building will be used for (a restaurant has more safety requirements than an office, for example.) More on changes of occupancy here.