

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Allen County Building Department

### **What exactly does the Building Department do?**

The Allen County Building Department does a lot! In addition to issuing permits for work being done to construct or improve building and structures, they investigate complaints from area residents, work with other city and county departments on building safety and security issues, help improve Allen County by selling abandoned properties, and help assess damage in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

There are some things that people are surprised to learn about the Building Department. For example:

- It receives and responds to 30-50 calls each week from area residents who have concerns about the safety of a project near them or who are reporting a possible violation of building safety or safe housing codes.
- When the tragedy of a fire strikes, the Building Department is responsible for controlling the scene after the fire fighters have cleared it and for condemning and securing the structure if necessary.
- The Building Department helps ensure community safety by working with the Health Department to condemn and secure a house being used to manufacture drugs.

For more information on what the Building Department does in our community, visit the Homeowner's Toolkit on the Building Department page of [www.allencounty.us](http://www.allencounty.us).

### **Why do I need a permit to do work on my home?**

All structures – from office buildings to single family homes to decks and sheds – are required to meet building safety codes. To ensure that these safety codes are met, our trained inspectors visit the structure during construction and upon completion. You need a permit so the Building Department knows what kind of work you're doing and can send the inspector with the appropriate knowledge to complete the inspection.

In addition to helping make sure your home improvements are done safely, securing a permit is part of maintaining the record on your property. When someone is considering purchasing property, it can be valuable to know what work has been done on the property, when it was completed and who completed it.

### **Why is there a fee to get a permit?**

It takes time and human resources to maintain and process permits, maintain records and generally help ensure that the buildings we live and work in are safe. The Building Department is funded by user fees, which means expenses for the department are covered by the fees people and businesses pay for permits not by tax dollars. The Building Department has earned a reputation for being a good steward of resources.

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### **How is the Building Department different from the Planning Department?**

The Planning and Building Departments have to work very closely, and it's likely that you'll need to work with both departments if you're planning a home improvement or new construction project. In general, the Planning Department is responsible for deciding whether or not the project **can** be completed, and the Building Department is responsible for enforcing **how** the project is completed.

So, if you're planning to add on to your home, build a fence, construct a deck or add some other structure to your property, your first stop is the Planning Department, where they'll help ensure that your project meets zoning and land use requirements. Then, once you have approval from the Planning Department, you'll visit the Building Department for a permit. Throughout the project, you'll contact the Building Department to schedule inspections.

### **How do I learn more?**

For more information about the Building Department and for important safety tips, visit the Building Department page of [www.allencounty.us](http://www.allencounty.us).

For a guide to the planning and permitting process for your next home improvement project, visit the Building Department page of [www.allencounty.us](http://www.allencounty.us) and open the Before You Remodel guide.

For current Indiana Building Codes, visit the Allen County Public Library or call the Building Department.