

OCCUPANCY PERMITS FOR ONE AND TWO FAMILY DWELLINGS ONLY

INTRODUCTION

In the Municipality of Penn Hills, we currently use the 1984 BOCA Existing Structures Code with amendments for inspections on existing structures when there is a transfer of ownership or change of tenant. For a little bit of information, there are other codes that the existing structure code refers to, such as the current zoning code, grading code, electrical code, plumbing code, and fire code. Also, there are policies that are required on the occupancy permit, such as no lien letters and sanitary sewers being available and claims on properties.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The fees for an Occupancy Permit change from time to time. Right now they are \$50.00 for one and two family dwelling. This can be checked on by checking the current fee schedule, which is now Ordinance 2515 of 2009.
2. Forms are available by either picking them up at the Municipal Code Enforcement Office, 12245 Frankstown Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235 or calling 412-798-2132 and one will be mailed to you.
3. The applicant must fill out the form properly and it must be printed legibly or typed. Signatures that are not legible to read must have their name printed after the signature.
4. The office is open Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm and scheduled inspections are performed Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.
5. The time period of an occupancy inspection will vary depending on how much has to be done to the interior of the dwelling and exterior of the property. So, therefore, this punch list is being made to give you a jumpstart in getting things done before the inspector arrives.

STANDARD PUNCH LIST

1. Exterior Structure
 - a. Sanitation – All exterior property areas and premises shall be maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition, free from any accumulation of rubbish or garbage.
 - b. Accessory Structures – All accessory structures, including detached garages, fences, and walls shall be maintained in a structurally sound condition. Also, swimming pools are considered accessory structures and must be maintained.

- c. Street Numbers – Currently street numbers on an existing structure are to be Arabic, 3” x ½” minimum size and visible from the street. The new code which is the International 2009 Building Code for residential allows 4” x ½” minimum size, in Arabic numbers or alphabetical letters, contrast with their background, and visible from the street. Where access is by means of a private road and the building address cannot be viewed from the public way, a monument, pole or other sign or means shall be used to identify the structure. All of the above will be accepted.
- d. Structural Members – All supporting structural members of all structures shall be kept structurally sound.
- e. Roofs – The roof shall be structurally sound, tight, and not have any defects that might admit rain.
- f. Chimneys – All chimneys, cooling towers, smoke stacks, and similar appurtenances shall be maintained structurally safe, sound and in good repair.
- g. Porches – Porches elevated off of ground level 30 inches or more require a guardrail with vertical balusters no more than 6 inches apart. The new International 2009 Building Code requires the vertical balusters of not more than 4 inches apart. If property is inspected and there are no guardrails or balusters, you must follow the new spacing requirements.
- h. Exterior Steps – The requirement for exterior steps are the same as interior steps. When there is 4 or more steps a hand rail is required. Rule of thumb means, 30” or more in height counted by risers and stable enough to hold falling weight of 150 lbs. They must also follow the size for grabbing the handrail which would be 2-1/2” or 2-1/4” diameter on rail for graspability. We will no longer accept a two by four that does not meet the code.
- i. Windows and Door Frames – These components shall be maintained so as to exclude rain, and substantially exclude wind from entering the dwelling or structure.
- j. Openable Windows – Every window, other than a fixed window, shall be capable of being easily opened and shall be held in position by window hardware.
- k. Door Hardware – Every exterior door and its hardware shall be maintained in good condition. Door locks on all doors entering dwelling units shall be in good repair and capable of tightly securing the door. The new Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code requires this to be done because the building could be classified as an unsafe structure without having secured locked doors.
- l. Exterior Handrails – Refer to Exterior Steps, h. This means that when risers of steps add up do 30” or more a handrail is required.

2. Interior Structure

- a. Structural Members – These components shall be maintained structurally sound, not showing any signs of deterioration, which would render them incapable of carrying the imposed loads.
- b. Interior Surfaces – These components shall be maintained in good, clean and sanitary condition. Peeling paint, cracked or loose plaster, decayed wood and other defective surface conditions shall be eliminated.
- c. Sanitation – The interior shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition, free from any accumulation of rubbish, refuse, clutter, or garbage.
- d. Handrails and Guardrails – Every flight of stairs that are four or more risers high shall have handrails. This means anything over 30” or more counted by risers. Every open portion of a stair, landing, or balcony shall have guardrails. Handrails shall be not less than thirty (30) inches above the floor or grade below shall have guardrails. Handrails shall be not less than thirty (30) inches or more than thirty-four (34) inches high, or by the current building code if there is no handrail at the time of inspection it would then be thirty-four (34) inches to thirty-eight (38) inches measured vertically above the nosing of the tread or above the floor of the landing or balcony. Exception would be for a design for a handicap person in the residential dwelling. Guardrails shall be not less than thirty (30) inches high above the floor of the landing or balcony or by the current code if there is no guardrail at the time of inspection it would then be no more than forty-two (42) inches high. Every handrail and guardrail shall be firmly fastened and capable of bearing normally imposed loads and shall be maintained in good condition.
- e. Light – All spaces or rooms shall be provided sufficient light so as not to endanger health and safety.
- f. Toilet Rooms – Every bathroom and water closet compartment shall comply with the light and ventilation requirements for habitable spaces as required by Section ES-401.2, except that a window shall not be required in bathrooms or water closet compartments equipped with an approved mechanical ventilation system. Air exhausted by a mechanical ventilation system from bathroom or water closet compartment must be exhausted to the exterior and may not be re-circulated to any space, including the space from which it is withdrawn. The final decision would be made by the Allegheny County Plumbing Department.
- g. Clothes Dryer Exhaust – Clothes dryer venting systems shall be independent of all other systems and shall be vented in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations or by the current mechanical code at the time of inspection.
- h. Plumbing Fixtures – All plumbing fixtures shall be maintained in a safe and usable condition in accordance with Allegheny County plumbing specifications.

- i. Sewage System – First of all, if main sanitary sewer line is available, the owner must tap in to the sanitary sewer line. Verification will be necessary through the Department of Water Pollution Control. The current telephone number is 412-798-2171. Right now we use the Allegheny County Plumbing requirement for distance to the line which is 250 ft. or less to our main sanitary sewer line. You are allowed to have a functioning septic system or a legal holding tank if approved by County Septic Tank Division.
- j. Dye Test – Currently, all single-family dwellings require a dye test at time of inspection which will show if there is any violations of the inflow and infiltration of sanitary sewers. This means that storm water is no allowed to be directed into the sanitary sewer lines. This is required and is valid for one (1) year from the date of the dye testing. There is also random testing going on by the Municipality which is done for approximately 1,000 houses at a time. That test is totally different than the required dye test for change of ownership or tenant. Any questions on the random dye testing contact Water Pollution Control Department.
- k. Heating Facilities – Furnaces, fireplaces and other heating devices shall be properly maintained and in proper working order.
- l. Smoke Detectors – A minimum of one smoke detector is required adjacent to bedroom areas or you can go to the current building code which requires a smoke detector in each and every bedroom and one on each floor. On newer homes that are bell wired together and one goes off and all detector go off, would have to be maintained and kept in good working order.
- m. GFI's(ground fault interceptors) – Will be required near sinks (kitchen and bathroom) and all areas where a receptacle is within three (3) feet of a water supply. Also the ruling factor would be whatever the current electrical codes say.

3. Accessory Structures/Garages

- a. Integral garages shall have one-hour fire-rated walls and ceilings. Drywall finishing is often required.
- b. Doors between integral garages must be 1-3/4” or 1-3/8” solid core wood doors or an approved equivalent.
- c. Doors shall a threshold or proper sweep.
- d. Garages separated by a breezeway may also require fire-rated construction. This changes from time to time so if the fire rating is not present at inspection you must go according to the current code.
- e. Detached garage door devices and other accessory structures must be maintained structurally sound and free of code deficiencies.
- f. Automatic garage door devices must be retractable.

- g. Swimming pools – both in ground and aboveground pools must meet fencing and safety requirements. Swimming pools under the current code require a swimming pool permit. There are exceptions. Contact the Code Enforcement Department for the regulations (412-798-2132).
- h. Decks and yard areas not attached to the house designed as a platform must meet guardrail requirements if any part of elevation is thirty (30) inches or more off ground level.

4. Other Considerations

- a. A code officer will look for other common zoning violations such as junk cars, rubbish and debris, business activity, setbacks, etc.
- b. Currently, there are three (3) lien letters required before a final occupancy inspection can be approved. These are listed below:

Municipality of Penn Hills – Finance Department
12245 Frankstown Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15235 - 412-798-2112

Portnoff Law Associates, LTD (Delinquent sewage collector)
1000 Sandy Hill Road, Suite 150
Norristown, PA 19401
Property owners can call for verifications - 1-866-211-9466
Ask for Theresa Manning FAX – 484-690-9305

One of the following Water Authorities

- 1. Wilksburg Penn Joint Water Authority
2200 Robinson Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
412-473-3482
- 2. Oakmont Water Authority
P.O. Box 73
Oakmont, PA 15139
412-828-7220

This is not all inclusive. It was prepared to generally assist homeowners, real estate agents and other parties in understanding the occupancy permit process. Codes and ordinances change, currently we are under the 2009 International Codes. Please contact the Penn Hills Department of Code Enforcement with specific questions (412-798-2132).