

## Permit Process

### Talk to your local Code Office

Your building codes department wants your project to be a success and will help you avoid potential problems that could cost you time and money. You will be asked some basic questions (What are you planning to do? Where?), advised of any requirements and, if necessary, referred to other departments for their approval. You will receive an application for a building permit.

### Submit Application

At this stage you will document the “Who, What, When, Where and How” of your job, along with all plans and documentation of proposed work.

### Review Process

In a brief amount of time, the code official will review your plans and associated documentation to determine if your project is in compliance with local requirements. If your plans meet those requirements, a permit is issued. If not, the code official may suggest solutions to help correct the problem.

### Receive Permit

Now that you have been approved for a permit, you have legal permission to start construction. A fee is collected to cover the cost of the application, the review and the inspection process. An experienced code official is available should you have any questions concerning your project. You should consider your code official as an ally who will help you make your project a success.

### Job-Site Visits

On-site inspections will be required to make certain the work conforms to the permit, local codes and plans. Again, you will have access to the expertise of the code official to help you with questions or concerns regarding the project and to ward off potentially costly mistakes. The code official will let you know approximately how many inspections may be needed for your project.

### Final Approval

The code official will provide documentation when construction is complete and code compliant. Enjoy your new surroundings with the peace of mind and knowledge they meet the safety standards in your community.

### What is a building permit?

A building Permit gives you legal authorization to start construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

### Do I need a building permit?

Building permits are required for all decks that are attached to the home or are 30 inches or more above grade. Decks and platforms not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and not attached to a structure with frost footings, do not require a building permit.

A building permit is the best way to protect a major investment and life safety in your home. It ensures minimum construction standards are met and appropriate materials are used.

### What good does a permit do?

Your home or business is an investment. If your construction project does not comply with the codes adopted by your community, the value of your investment could be reduced. Property insurers may not cover work done without permits and inspections.

### Your building application will need:

1. An application for permit.
2. A site plan or survey.
3. A deck plan with all applicable structural details

### Required inspections

1. **Footings:** Inspected after the holes are dug, **but prior to pouring of concrete!**
2. **Framing:** Inspected after framing is completed. This inspection can be completed at the time of the final inspection if all parts of the framing will be visible and accessible with prior approval of the building official.
3. **Final:** Inspected after completion.

*The purpose of this brochure is to provide a brief overview of the regulations that apply in the unincorporated areas of Cass County. The relevant code requirements are summarized. Further information can be obtained by calling the Building Codes and Zoning Department .*



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## Cass County Building Codes, Environmental Health and Zoning

## Informational Packet

# DECKS

*Guidelines for planning the  
construction of a deck.*



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## General building code requirements

Cass County adopted the 2006 International Residential Code (2006 IRC). All "R" code references provided in this brochure pertain to the 2006 IRC.

A. Footings must extend to frost depth

B. Decks need to be designed for a 40-pound per-square-foot live load. Decks exposed to the weather must be constructed of approved wood with natural resistance to decay such as redwood, cedar or treated wood. Ledger boards must be bolted or lagged to the building and all connections between the deck and dwelling must be flashed or spaced away from the dwelling band/rim joist.

C. Columns and posts in contact with the ground or embedded in concrete, earth or masonry must be of pressure-treated wood approved for ground contact or naturally decay resistance.

D. All decks, balconies or porches, open sides of landings and stairs that are more than 30 inches above grade or a floor below must be protected by a guard not less than 36 inches in height. Grade is measured at perimeter of deck. 2006 IRC guard opening limitations states required guard on open sides of stairways, raised floor areas, balconies and porches shall have intermediate rails or ornamental closures which do not allow passage of a sphere 4 inches (102mm) or more in diameter. Exceptions: 1. The triangular openings formed by the riser, tread and bottom rail of a guard at the open side of a stairway are permitted to be of such a size that a sphere 6 inches (152 mm) cannot pass through. 2. Openings for required guards on the sides of stair treads shall not allow a sphere 4-3/8 inches (107 mm) to pass through (R312.2).

E. If a stairway is to be provided, it must be no less than 36 inches in width. Stairways may be constructed having an 7-3/4-inch-maximum rise (height) and a 10-inch-minimum run (length). The largest tread rise and tread run may not exceed the smallest corresponding tread rise or run by more than 3/8 inch. Open risers are permitted, provided the opening between the treads does not permit the passage of a 4-inch-diameter sphere

F. Handrails are required on all stairways having four or more risers. All required handrails shall be of the following types or provide equivalent graspability.

Type I. Handrails with a circular cross section shall have an outside diameter of at least 1-1/4 inches (32 mm) and not greater than 2 inches (51 mm). If the handrail is not circular it shall have a perimeter dimension of at least 4 inches (102 mm) and not greater than 6-1/4 inches (160 mm) with a maximum cross section of dimension of 2-1/4 inches (57mm).

Type II. Handrails with a perimeter greater than 6-1/4 inches (160 mm) shall provide a graspable finger recess area on both sides of the profile. The finger recess shall begin within a distance of 3/4 inch (19 mm) measured vertically from the tallest portion of the profile and achieve a depth of at least 5/16 inch (8 mm) within 7/8 inch (22 mm) below the widest portion of the profile. This required depth shall continue for at least 3/8 inch (10 mm) to a level that is not less than 1-3/4 inches (45 mm) below the tallest portion of the profile. The minimum width of the handrail above the recess shall be 1-1/4 inches (32 mm) to a maximum of 2-3/4 inches (70 mm). Edges shall have a minimum radius of 0.01 inch (0.25 mm).(R311.5.6.3). This required depth shall continue for at least 3/8 inch (10 mm) to a level that is not less than 1-3/4 inches (45 mm) below the tallest portion of the profile. The minimum width of the handrail above the recess shall be 1-1/4 inches (32 mm) to a maximum of 2-3/4 inches (70 mm). Edges shall have a minimum radius of 0.01 inch (0.25 mm).(R311.5.6.3).

G. The top of the handrail must not be less than 34 inches or more than 38 inches above the nosing (front edge) of treads and they must be returned to a wall or post. The electrical code requires overhead power lines to be located a minimum of 10 feet above decks and platforms. Existing lines may need to be raised if a new deck is to be installed beneath them.

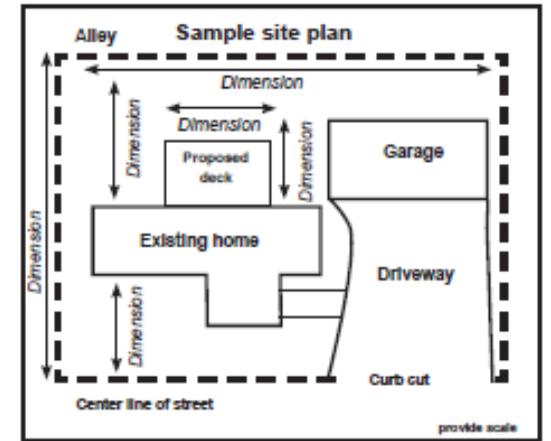
H. When locating a deck, care must be given to the location of outside gas, water and electric meters, wells, and septic systems. These may need to be relocated to allow for construction of the deck. Septic systems and wells may be difficult to relocate, requiring an alternative location for the deck. Contact your gas, water, electrical provider and codes department prior to placement of any deck that will interfere with these devices.

## Plans: Site, floor and elevation

The text and sample drawings below show the minimum detail expected to ensure the permit process proceeds smoothly. **One set of each site, floor and elevation plans are required.** Plans do not need to be professionally drawn.

Setbacks from property lines vary depending upon your home's zoning district. Contact the building codes department for the requirements. This is an important first step in the planning for any deck project.

A site plan should be drawn to scale that indicates the lot dimensions, the location and size of the existing structure(s), and the location and size of the proposed structure. Indicate the setbacks from property lines of the existing and proposed structure(s). Include the septic system area and wells, if applicable.



## Floor plan

1. Note proposed deck size.
2. Note size and spacing of floor joists.
3. Note size and type of decking material.
4. Note size, type, location and spacing of posts.
5. Note size and type of beams.
6. Note all connections methods.

When a pressure-preservative-treated wood is used, it must comply with the American Wood Preservers Association U1 Standard based on exposure (exterior) and use (above ground or ground contact). The lumber must bear the quality mark (stamp or end tag) of an approved inspection agency. Designers, builders and homeowners need to verify that proper hardware (hangers, nails, brackets) are appropriate with the particular treatment of the lumber. This not only applies to decks utilizing these products, but sill plates and posts as well.

## Elevation plan

1. Note height of structure from grade.
2. Note size and depth of footings.
3. Note guard height and spacing (if any).
4. Note stairway rise or run and handrail height (if any).
5. Note clearance of overhead wires (if applicable).

