

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS PROCEDURE		CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA <hr/> TITLE 4 — BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPANCY CODE
OP-0702		
SUBJECT OF PROCEDURE: SELF-CERTIFICATION OF CONSTRUCTION PLANS FOR ONE- OR TWO- FAMILY DWELLINGS		REFERENCE CODE SECTION(S): A-301.6, A-301.8, A-302.1, A-302.5.2, A-302.9 and A-304.3
FOR: CONSTRUCTION SERVICES DIVISION		PAGE 1 OF 6
ISSUED BY		ISSUE DATE: July 18, 2007
NAME: Robert D. Solvibile	SIGNATURE	EFFECTIVE DATE: July 18, 2007
TITLE: Commissioner		REVISION DATE(S):

PURPOSE:

To define a process for the self-certification of certain types of construction plans as provided for in the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code as amended by Act 157 of 2006.

SCOPE:

This self-certification procedure is limited to construction plans for one-family and two-family dwelling units and utility and miscellaneous use structures that have been prepared and certified by a design professional who is licensed or registered under the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

POLICY:

Construction plans for a one-family or two-family dwelling unit, submitted in accordance with this self-certification procedure shall be granted approval or denied, in whole or in part, within five business days of the filing date. The time limit may not be extended, even upon agreement between the parties.

The time limit for the Department's approval or denial of construction plans for a property designated historic or located in a designated historic district shall be extended by the amount of time the application is under review by the Historical Commission.

Construction plan approval is only one component of the permit process. A permit will not be issued before all other requirements have been met by the applicant.

PROCEDURE:

I. Licensed or Registered Design Professional

A. Design Professional in Responsible Charge

1. The owner of the property, for which construction plans are submitted for self-certification, shall designate on the permit application the licensed or registered design professional who has certified the plans as being the design professional in responsible charge.

2. In self-certifying plans, the design professional doing so accepts the designation as the registered design professional in responsible charge of the project.
3. Later designation of a substitute design professional in responsible charge, if necessary, shall be done in accordance with Section A-304 of the Philadelphia Administrative Code.

The new registered design professional is required to either:

- a) review and re-certify the previously certified plans with a new letter (See I.B) or,
- b) submit new plans for approval. (To qualify for self-certification, new plans must be accompanied by a self-certification letter from the new registered design professional.)

An amended permit will be required and an amended permit fee will be charged.

B. Self-certification Letter

1. To be eligible for self-certification and the associated reduced timeframes for the Department to approve or deny plans, the application and plans must be accompanied by a separate letter that:
 - a) certifies the plans unconditionally (See Appendix A for the required wording of the self-certification letter.); and
 - b) is on the design professional's letterhead; and
 - c) includes the design professional's name, business address, phone number and fax number; and
 - d) is signed, sealed and dated in accordance with the professional licensing and registration laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
2. Applications that are otherwise eligible but lack the self-certification statement will not qualify for the reduced timeframes for approval or denial.

C. False Self-Certification

False statements of self-certification may result in:

- disapproval of the plans;
- revocation of the permit(s);
- work being ordered stopped;
- the imposition of fines and other penalties;
- the design professional being reported to his/her licensing/registering agency for action;
- sanctions on the design professional imposed by the Department.

D. Plan Submission

1. Plans and the self-certification letter are to be submitted at, or mailed to, the:
Permit Services Unit
Concourse Level of MSB
1401 JFK Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102

2. Plans and the self-certification letter will be time-stamped upon acceptance for filing.
3. For plans submitted for self-certification, no deferred submittals of portions of the design shall be allowed. Only complete designs shall be accepted.

E. Other Requirements

Although qualifying plans will be approved or denied within five business days, a construction permit can not be issued until all other requirements are met. A list of these pre-requisites is available at the Permit Services Unit and on-line at www.phila.gov/li (under "Services" select "Permits").

Note: It is recommended that all pre-requisites be obtained in advance and be submitted with the plans. Later submission of pre-requisites may delay permit issuance as previously approved construction plans are checked for conformance to any requirements in the pre-requisites.

F. Revisions

Any proposed revisions or changes to approved self-certified construction plans shall necessitate an additional plan review and shall be accompanied by a new self-certification letter along with a completed permit application for an amended permit.

Revisions shall not be eligible for the reduced timeframe for approval or denial if a new self-certification letter is not submitted.

II. Permit Services Unit

A. Receipt

1. Check for all standard requirements including non-refundable Filing Fee, required number of sets of plans and correctly completed application
2. Verify eligibility for self-certification:
 - a) plans are for a one-family or two-family dwelling unit;
 - b) plans are prepared by a design professional (engineer or architect) licensed or registered in Pennsylvania who has signed and sealed a properly completed self-certification letter (see I.B);
 - c) design professional has not had his or her right to submit self-certified plans revoked by the Department;
 - d) for new construction, verify that a completed Energy Conservation Certificate of Design form and supporting documentation accompany the application;
 - e) for new construction, verify that a completed Structural Design Criteria form accompanies the application.
3. If the application is not eligible for self-certification provide the applicant with a written explanation as to why.
4. If the application is eligible for self-certification:
 - a) Identify it as such for examining staff as per unit practice.

- b) If the application is not accompanied by all pre-requisites, provide the applicant with the Department's list of all pre-requisites that must be provided prior to issuance of a Building, Electrical or Plumbing Permit.

B. Review

1. There shall be no qualifying statements on the self-certification statement that limit the certification conditions.
2. Plans which include a basement shall indicate the use of every room and space in that basement (storage, family room, laundry room, etc.).
 - a) Basement plans that contain spaces with uses that are not identified are not eligible for self-certification.
 - b) If a habitable space is indicated, the building plans shall show the required emergency escape and rescue opening(s) or be ineligible for self-certification. (See Code Bulletin 0601 - Habitable Basements – Emergency and Rescue Openings.)
3. Review items:
 - a) design elements having direct impact on the adjoining property and/or structure - excavation, foundation (See Code Bulletin 0503, Excavations and the Protection of Foundations), and use of party wall,
 - b) fire safety features - fire alarms and fire protection system, if any
 - c) plans for new construction for conformance to what is submitted on Energy Conservation Certificate of Design form and Supporting Documentation
 - d) for new construction, the required soils investigation report, if any (See Code Bulletin 9966, Soils Investigation for New Construction.)
 - e) Structural Design form to assure proper loads were accounted for in the design.
 - f) pre-requisites, when submitted, to verify that construction plans meet all standards set by the pre-requisites, including zoning.

C. Approval of Plans

1. The Departmental stamp used to show approval of plans based on a self-certification shall indicate that approval was based upon self-certification.
2. Include the self-certification letter with other documents that will be imaged for plans retention.

D. Denial of Plans

1. Within five business days deny any self-certified plan found not in compliance with the applicable code(s) and immediately notify the applicant, setting forth the reasons in writing, identifying the elements of the plans which are not in compliance, and providing a citation to the relevant provisions of the code.
2. Provide the Permit Services Manager a copy of the self-certification letter and a copy of the Refusal letter.

E. Issuance of Permit

Upon approval of the construction plans

1. If all other pre-requisites have been accepted, the Department shall issue a construction permit immediately upon receipt of all required fees.
2. If the application is lacking any pre-requisite, the Department shall issue a letter to the applicant informing her/him that the construction plans have been approved but that issuance of a permit is contingent upon receipt of all pre-requisites. The application will be considered abandoned six months after this request for pre-requisites if no response is received.
3. Permits issued based upon self-certified plans shall be notated, "This permit was approved upon the self-certification of the design plans by the licensed registered design professional who certified them." Such other notations as required shall also be made on the permit.

III. Field Inspection

Permits approved based upon self-certified plans shall be inspected as would any other permit, with the following exceptions:

1. Permits approved upon self-certification are required to have plans that might not otherwise be required. The inspector is to verify that the work adheres to the self-certified plans.
2. An inspector observing a violation shall determine if the approved plans are being adhered to.
 - a) If not, the violation will be processed routinely.
 - b) If the violation is a result of the plans not complying with the code, the inspector shall issue the appropriate violations and a violation for self-certified plans that do not comply to the code (see section A-302.5 of the Violation Catalog).
3. Notify the Manager of Permit Services in writing or by e-mail that self-certified plans have been found to be in violation of the code. Provide the property address, the inspection date, the permit number and the abbreviation and/or a brief description of the violation(s) written as a result of the plan's non-compliance.

IV. Permit Services Manager

Upon written notification of an apparently false self-certification, determine the appropriate action to be taken regarding the self-certification statement. (See I.C)

REQUIRED WORDING
DESIGN PROFESSIONAL'S LETTER REQUESTING SELF-CERTIFICATION

As a [enter design profession(s) for which licensed/registered], I have prepared¹ the [enter Building, Electrical, or Plumbing] plans accompanying the permit application for², I certify that these plans for a [one or two]-family dwelling unit and/or its utility and miscellaneous use structures, if any, meet the applicable standards of the following [enter the year of the Code] Philadelphia Codes [Initial all that apply] :

<input type="checkbox"/> Building Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy Conservation Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Existing Building Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Property Maintenance Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Gas Code	

I have accepted the responsibility of being the registered design professional in responsible charge for this project and will be available to the Department's examiners and inspectors should issues arise during this project.

Note:

Any additional wording that may be construed as limiting these certification conditions will disqualify the plans for self-certification.

Letter shall be on the design professional's letterhead; and include name and business address, phone and fax numbers.

Letter shall be signed, sealed and dated in accordance with the professional licensing and registration laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

See I.C for consequences of false self-certification.

¹ A later substitute registered design professional in responsible charge who is re-certifying plans shall replace "prepared" with "reviewed".

² Use the complete, official Philadelphia Board of Revision of Taxes address for the property. You may find assistance in confirming the correctness of the address by going to WWW.BRTWEB@PHILA.GOV and selecting Property Search. You may add other identification of the submitted plans, such as a design number that you have put on the plans.