

Top 10 Building Permit Application Errors January 2024

1. Online eCLIPSE Applications

Most eCLIPSE application entries are intended to prompt an applicant for required documents, trigger required reviews by other departments, or otherwise drive workflow. Some of the common input errors that cause downstream problems and delay include:

- Failure to correctly identify [Impacts on Adjacent Property](#) and/or Acknowledgment of Adjacent Owner status.
- Failure to indicate that application includes [Excavation](#).
- Improper selection of [Development Impact Exemption](#).

As a reminder, the permit applicant is required by law to provide true and correct information with the permit application. It is important to read the instructions carefully and provide complete and accurate information. Those requiring assistance may submit an [online help request](#), engage in eCLIPSE chat, or file an application through a [virtual or in-person appointment](#).

2. Depth of Excavation

The depth of excavation has a significant impact on permit requirements. It dictates the need for a separate [excavation permit](#) and may trigger protection of adjacent property requirements.

When considering if the depth of an excavation is more than 5' below grade, the removal of fill must also be included. Even if a footing will not extend more than 5' below grade, the removal of fill below this depth is often required for construction.

Review the geotechnical report carefully before making an application to determine if your project will involve excavation more than 5' below grade.

3. Energy Conservation

New construction, additions, and alterations must comply with the building envelope, mechanical, and electrical power/ lighting provisions of 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). Depending on the scope of work, you may need to submit an [Energy Compliance Plan](#), energy compliance certificates, and/or calculations.

Be sure to review the [energy code compliance materials](#) and checklists before submitting your application.

4. Zoning Permit

A valid [Zoning/Use permit](#) is required for an application impacting the bulk or height of a building or the use of a space. Building plans must correspond to the approved Zoning/Use permit and plan.

5. Structural Details

Details are required for all structural work, including the modification of existing framing. Structural plans must be sealed by a design professional licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Please also be mindful of specific requirements for wall bracing. Conventional light-frame construction must be designed to resist lateral wind and seismic loads. Proposed construction must comply with the prescriptive requirements outlined in Chapter 23 of the 2018 International Building Code (IBC) or Chapter 6 of the 2018 International Residential Code (IRC). Engineered systems must be substantiated by design calculations sealed by a Professional Engineer licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A separate [wall bracing plan](#) is required with your application.

6. Exterior Wall Rating and Openings

Exterior walls must be rated in accordance with Tables 601 and 602 of the 2018 IBC. Openings in rated exterior walls must comply with Table 705.8 of the 2018 IBC.

7. Sprinkler Trade-Offs

The Building Code includes certain allowances and reductions for sprinklered buildings; however, not all types of sprinkler systems are eligible for all trade-offs.

For example, the following only apply to buildings sprinklered under NFPA 13:

- Table 508.4 - Minimum rating of fire barriers separating occupancies is reduced for sprinklered buildings.
- Table 705.8 - Maximum area of exterior wall openings is increased for sprinklered buildings.
- Section 708.3 / 711.2 - Minimum rating of dwelling unit separation walls and floors are reduced for sprinklered buildings.

It is important to read the referenced sections to understand any limits on the type of sprinkler systems that are eligible for trade-off.

8. Accessible Route

An accessible route regulated by Chapter 11 of the 2018 IBC is required for all newly constructed spaces and existing buildings undergoing a complete change in occupancy classification. An accessible route to the primary function area and toilet room / drinking fountains are required for all alterations affecting a primary function area or it must be demonstrated that a minimum of 20% of the contract cost is dedicated to improvements to the accessible route as per Chapter 3 of the 2018 International Existing Building Code (IEBC).

9. Number of Exits

Each space must be equipped with the minimum number and configuration of exits identified in Section 1006.2. of the 2018 IBC. Each story must be equipped with the minimum number of exits identified in Section 1006.3 of the 2018 IBC.

10. Code Analysis

Code analysis information must be included with the building permit application in accordance with Section 305.2.1.2 of the Philadelphia Administrative Code. The code analysis information must include the construction type, use and occupancy classification, means of egress information, occupant loads, and fire protection elements.

A common error relates to identification of the type of sprinkler system (i.e. NFPA 13 or 13R). If the type of sprinkler system changes, an amended permit is required to update the permit record and to ensure that there is no impact on other aspects of the building design.