



Why do I need a permit to replace my windows?

This is a common question and people are under the false impression that if they are not altering the structural frame or they are just simply replacing the existing windows, then a building permit and inspections are not necessary. The truth is that your windows are a very important component in your home's building envelope and they affect many aspects of your home's safety, performance, and comfort. Building permits and inspections are necessary to assure and document that important safety regulations are being complied with.

Windows, glazing and/or fenestration require building permits per the California Building Code (CBC) Section 105.1 and the California Residential Code (CRC) Section 105.1. These permits are required so that building inspectors can verify and document that all the minimum code requirements listed below are complied with, and the windows may perform their important work of protecting the health, life and safety of you, your family and our community.

Windows must comply with the following minimum code requirements:

- Some windows have specific requirements regarding their size for natural light and their opening size for ventilation, CBC Section 1203 and 1205, CRC Section 303
- Windows may have emergency egress requirements so that first responders can enter a bedroom and perform emergency life-saving rescues or so that occupants can escape, CBC Section 1029, CRC Section 310.
- Windows (including retrofit-type installations) are critical in maintaining a home's weather barrier from moisture intrusion, as regulated by CBC Section 1403 and 1405, CRC Section 703.8. Windows are a major cause of water intrusion in a structure which can lead to structural damage and possible growth of harmful mold in wall spaces. Mold can cause health problems in adults and sometimes permanent damage in young children. Also, windows not installed and sealed correctly may invite and promote pest infestation.
- Energy conservation is a major function of new windows, required by the California Energy Code, Section 116; however, if installed incorrectly, they can contribute to drafts and energy loss. Not all windows sold are approved for use; windows must be certified by the California Energy Commission to meet the minimum energy requirements of the California Energy Code.
- Many windows, doors, and glazed areas present a safety hazard if tempered glass is not utilized in areas subject to possible impact. These areas include; glass doors, glazing adjacent to doors, glass for tub and shower enclosures, glass adjacent to tubs, glass where the bottom edge is less than 18" above the floor, glass adjacent to stairways, landings, and ramps when glass is less than 60" above the adjacent walking surface and other areas required by CBC Section 2406.4, CRC Section 308 and 327.

Window replacement can be a very costly project, but having a third-party inspection performed by the City will assure and document that your project is installed correctly, meets the manufacturer's installation requirements and meets all of the minimum code requirements noted above.