



## Commercial Permits



### Overview

It is important for any prospective building owner or tenant to understand that buildings are built in such a manner as to satisfy the building code requirements for its intended use. If for any reason, the tenant and/or use of that building or any portion thereof changes, the occupancy and permitting processes come into play. In all cases, new occupancy and/or permits must be obtained from the West County EMS & Fire Protection District PRIOR to occupying or modifying the space. Additionally, other jurisdictions such as St. Louis County and/or any applicable municipality will have similar but separate processes that must be followed.

Commercial buildings and developments may require one or more of the following permits:

- **Commercial Building/Remodel/Interior Fit-Out**
- **Site Development Plan**
- **Underground Fire Main**
- **Fire Alarm System**
- **Fire Sprinkler System**
- **Commercial Hood System (Kitchen Fire Suppression)**
- **Temporary Fuel Tank**

The first step for a commercial building depends on several things. Is this a new building or an existing building? If it is an existing building, is there any renovation of the space other than strictly paint and carpet?

### New Buildings

The first step for a new building or expansion of an existing building for a new tenant is a Site Plan Permit. This allows a review of the proposed building as compared to code requirements for size, use, access, location on a parcel, fire hydrant locations and other features governed by



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the applicable building and fire codes. After a Site Development Plan Permit is issued (for new or expanded buildings), the next step is seeking a full set of permits from the West County EMS & Fire Protection District. Please note that we do not allow “deferred submittals” which means that no permits will be issued until all required designs have been submitted and approved.

### Existing Buildings with New Occupant

For any Existing Building, before permits may be entertained, it is important to know what tenant resides or will reside in the space. Where a new tenant is proposed or intending to use the space, the first step is applying for an Occupancy Permit. The occupancy application will provide key information about the tenant, building owner, contact information and intended use of the space. Where the proposed new use of the space is different than the previous use of the space, a **Change of Use** occurs and may have code compliance implications. An inspection will be scheduled for the building to assess the space for the proposed occupant. In those cases where one or more building permits will be sought, occupancy approval will likely not occur until completion of work sufficient to provide Temporary Occupancy authorization or Final Occupancy upon completion of all work.

### Change of Occupancy vs. Change of Use

When a space changes tenants but otherwise remains used in the same manner, the “**Change of Occupancy**” often requires little or no upgrades or building renovations. When a the use of a space changes, the “**Change of Use**” triggers, under most circumstances, a need for the space to comply with current building codes. Business offices, retail (mercantile) sales, assembly (churches, schools, movie theaters, meeting rooms, etc.) and storage are just some examples of different **Use** categories. **Change of Use** can be a more complicated process and will require an assessment of the building and its proposed new use by a registered architect. Different **Use** types have a relative hazard level associated with them. It typically is allowable to change a building’s use with few updates as long as the hazard level does not increase. Other Use types can trigger requirements for fire alarms, fire sprinkler systems or other changes that can quickly add up. It also must be noted that some fire sprinkler and alarm systems are designed specific to a type of use and may require extensive and expensive modifications for a different use. It may not always be feasible to update a building so perspective real estate buyers and/or perspective tenants should always have a professional evaluate the space for the desired use prior to purchasing or signing a lease.

### Existing Buildings with Existing Occupant

For any building where the existing tenant desires to renovate, remodel or expand into an adjacent area of the building but is not expanding the building’s exterior dimensions, the first step is seeking a full set of permits from the West County EMS & Fire Protection District. Please note that we do not allow “deferred submittals” which means that no permits will be issued until all required designs have been submitted and approved.



## **Commercial Plans**

All commercial plan submittals (except Temporary Fuel Tanks and Commercial (Kitchen) Hood Fire Suppression Systems) to the West County EMS & Fire Protection District shall be in PDF format, transmitted by e-mail or non-returnable storage medium (disk, thumb drive, etc.) and must include the following items in the plan submittal for review:

1. Seal of the Professional Engineer or Architect currently licensed in Missouri who both directly supervised and holds responsibility for the plans as drawn and submitted
2. Current licensure must be valid and on-file with the *Missouri Board for Architects, Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors* for engineering or architecture **for both the registered design professional and the engineering or architectural firm (if a corporation or LLC)** on the plans. (Ref. RSMo 327.401.2)
3. Building Address (including Suite Number if applicable)
4. Building Owner (Property Management Firm Acceptable)
5. Other Title Block information as required by the Missouri Board for APESLA under RSMo 327 and MO CSR 2030-2.050
6. Occupant/Proposed Occupant Name
7. Occupancy Class (Including Previous and Proposed if Change of Use)
8. Building Construction Type
9. Total Building S.F.
10. Project S.F.
11. Code Block that correctly identifies the applicable building and fire codes including NFPA documents and editions as may be required for alarm, life safety and sprinkler design.
12. Proposed Number of Occupants for Project Limits/Area
13. Number of Floors Above Ground Level
14. Number of Floors Below Ground Level
15. Map of Project Limits/Area in Relation to Building Floor Footprint

Building permit submittals shall include the architect's assessment of Life Safety data including egress distance, travel paths and other associated information. The egress paths shall be shown in scaled drawings.

All plans submitted shall be computer-drawn. Sealed plans with handwritten changes or addendum of any kind will be assumed to have been made after the professional seal and will be automatically rejected.

All fire resistance rated construction, including existing construction, shall be shown on plans within the project limits/area where the fire rating is required to satisfy code requirements. Any existing fire-rated construction must be maintained during remodel work.

Fire alarm plans must include the location of the Fire Alarm Control Panel (list Floor Number and Room Number or show on plans)

For more information about Underground Fire Mains, Fire Sprinkler Systems and Temporary Fuel Tanks, please see the respective reference sheets on our website at [www.westcounty-fire.org](http://www.westcounty-fire.org) under the Fire Marshal tab.



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## **Current West County EMS & Fire Protection District Codes**

(IBC) International Building Code –2021 Edition w/Amendments

(IEBC) International Existing Building Code – 2021 Edition w/Amendments

(IFC) International Fire Code - 2021 Edition w/Amendments

(WC) West County Overarching Building and Fire Code 2021 Edition

*NFPA Codes versions are the versions as referenced under ICC 2021 except as provided for in the West County Overarching Building and Fire Code*

If a separate permitting jurisdiction (with authority to issue permits for a project within the West County EMS & Fire service area) has adopted a different code where a provision of the codes are in actual or perceived conflict, the most conservative conditions, requirements or interpretations of the two codes will control in the interest of public safety.