



Flood Damage

Bulletin 56

Division of Building, Safety, and Inspection for 2018 International Codes

If your home was damaged by a flood, permits are required before you can repair stick-built homes, other buildings, and mobile and manufactured homes.

If any structure has been damaged by a flood, inspections are required **before you can apply for a permit**. Pierce County provides these inspections at no cost to you. This will help assess the safety of flood-damaged buildings and confirm the percentage of damage.

Required Inspections:

- **Rapid Assessment Inspection**

This inspection is performed as soon as possible following the disaster. The Inspectors will post the building with a placard that describes limitations of occupancy and/or requirements for permits. To request an inspection, call (253) 798-4900 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- **Detailed Assessment Inspection**

Once you receive your rapid assessment posting, you will need to call to schedule for a detailed assessment inspection. Once scheduled, the inspector will need access into the structure and areas affected by the damage. Conditions of the original posting may change.

Confirmation of Damage Letter

A letter confirming the detailed assessment will be sent to the property owner within two days of the detailed assessment inspection.

Expedited Permit Process

After receipt of your Confirmation of Damage Letter you can apply for all necessary permits. Pierce County has an expedited permit process for flood affected properties to assist our community's recovery. See [Pierce County Code 18E.70.030.A.5](#) for more information.

Agricultural Buildings

Agricultural buildings are subject to alternative requirements that promote the continuation of agricultural uses in flood hazard areas. The alternative requirements can be found in [Pierce County Code Title 18E.70.040](#).

Mobile and Manufactured Homes - Additional Requirements:

- A permit is required to place a Mobile/Manufactured Home on a lot, or to re-install after a flood in unincorporated Pierce County.
- To modify or perform work **on the Mobile/Manufactured Home**, contact the State Department of Labor and Industries at (800) 705-1411 Option 3. Or go online at: <https://lni.wa.gov/licensing-permits/manufacturedmobile-homes-other-mobile-structures/manufactured-home-permits-inspections/>

Pierce County Code defines Flood Damage this way:

[18E.20.070 - Substantial Improvement and Substantial Damage](#)

- A. **Substantial Improvement.** Substantial improvement is the repair, reconstruction, addition, rehabilitation, replacement, or other improvement of a structure taking place during a period of five years, the cumulative cost of which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the current valuation of the existing structure.
1. The Building Official shall determine the current valuation per Title [17C](#) PCC.
 2. Substantial improvement occurs when the first alteration of any wall, ceiling, floor, or other structural part of the building takes place, whether or not that alteration affects the external dimensions of the structure. Substantial improvement does not, however, include either:
 - a. Any project for improvement of a structure to correct existing violations of State or local health, sanitary, or safety code specifications which have been identified by the local code enforcement official and which are the minimum necessary to assure safe living conditions; or
 - b. Any alteration of a structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places or a State Inventory of Historic Places.
- B. **Substantial Damage.** A structure is considered substantially damaged when the current valuation for the work of reconstructing or restoring a structure to its before damage condition exceeds 50 percent of the current valuation of the existing structure.
1. Damage to a structure may be sustained through any origin such as but not limited to earthquakes, fire, explosion, flood, landslides, or other calamity.
 2. The Building Official shall determine the current permit valuation per Title [17C](#) PCC.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if my property is in a "Floodway" or "Floodplain"?

- To verify whether your property is in a Floodway or Floodplain you can use the following links to contact [Pierce County Surface Water Management](#) for a property or find your property in [Pierce County Public GIS](#) and select "environmental" in the data menu and then select the "floodways" and "regulated floodplain 2017" map layers and then enter your address or tax parcel number under "find address or place" to be brought to a map of your property.

What if my property is in a "Floodway" AND is "Substantially Damaged"?

- Your property may NOT be repaired.

What if my property is in a "Floodway" AND is NOT "Substantially Damaged"?

- Your property may be repaired but must meet ALL applicable regulations. This may mean elevating the structure and access road and providing compensatory storage for the added fill. Interior work and second story additions can be done as long as the 50% valuation limit isn't exceeded, once more than 50%, your property may not be repaired or rebuilt.

What does the 50% damage assessment and/or improvement apply to?

- The 50% damage and/improvement is the limit in which the building is considered substantially damaged or improved. The 50% damage assessment for repairs and/or improvement is cumulative and includes all improvements or repairs done within a five-year period.

Can I elevate my building in a "Floodway"?

- Your structure can be elevated in a floodway. If you want to elevate your building to meet the County code, it will not count towards the substantial damage or improvement valuation.

What if my property is in a "Floodplain" AND is "Substantially Damaged"?

- Your building may be repaired but must meet ALL applicable regulations. This may mean relocating and/or elevating the structure, elevating the access road, and providing compensatory storage for any added fill.

What if my property is in a "Floodplain" AND is NOT "Substantially Damaged"?

- Your building may be repaired but must meet ALL applicable regulations. Caution should be taken if repairs are done just below the 50% threshold as any additional damage within the next 5-years WILL require the entire building to meet ALL applicable regulations. This may mean relocating and/or elevating the structure, elevating the access road, and providing compensatory storage for any added fill.

Is there a difference between a stick (site) built home vs. mobile (manufactured) home in obtaining a building permit?

- The only difference is the requirement for the L&I permit for repairing the manufactured home. For site-built homes, Pierce County would issue the repair permit. L&I would only issue an electrical permit.

Where can I obtain permits for repairs to the stick (site) built homes and other structures and for the re-setting of a Mobile/Manufactured Home?

- Permits can be obtained at the Pierce County Development Center located at 2401 South 35th Street, Tacoma, WA, East Entrance.

Is it OK for me to remove the wet carpet and insulation prior to obtaining repair or re-set permits?

- Yes

Where can I find more information?

- [FEMA](#) provides software and workbooks on flood damage and repair.