



Home Occupations and Cottage Industries

Bulletin #25

For 2018 International Codes

Acronyms

- PCC - Pierce County Code
- WAC - Washington Administrative Code
- IBC - International Building Code
- IRC - International Residential Code
- BPRS – Residential Building Permit
- PLAN – Reviewer responsible for use permits (Administrative and Conditional)
- BLDG – Reviewer responsible for building permits

General Standards for Home Occupation and Cottage Industry

The terms “home occupations” and “cottage industries” refer to the operation of a business in the home by the person living there.

BLDG Requirements

Permit applications will be reviewed under the International Building Code.

Home occupations

- Home occupations that have no associated construction activity and are offices, mercantile, personal care salons or similar uses and are less than 500 square feet **do not need a building permit.**
- Home occupations that have associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above need **building, plumbing, mechanical, and/or electrical permits** for the work being done.
- Home occupations which are **not** one of the uses listed in the definition above will require an occupancy separation. Any use that will require an occupancy separation wall **must have a permit** to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation must be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.

Cottage Industry Levels I & II

- Cottage Industry Levels I & II that are not over 500 square feet and have no associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above **do not need a building permit.**
- Cottage Industry Levels I & II that are over 500 square feet or are **not** one of the uses listed above, **need building permits.** Permits are required to construct an occupancy separation. Any use that will require an occupancy separation **must have a permit** to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation shall be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.

PLAN requirements

- Noticeable glare, noise, odor, vibration, smoke, dust, heat, or cause interference with radio or television receivers at or beyond the property lines shall not occur.
- Activities shall be performed inside the residence, an accessory structure, or a combination of the two.
- Structures shall comply with building and fire code requirements for permits, occupancy, and inspection.
- It shall be clearly secondary to the residential use of the property and shall not change the residential character of the dwelling or neighborhood.
- Manufacturing shall be limited to the small-scale assembly of already manufactured parts but does not preclude production of small, individually handcrafted items, furniture, or other wood items.

Pierce County Planning & Public Works, 2401 South 35th Street, Tacoma, Washington 98409

piercecountywa.gov/ppw

Revised 8/29/2022

- Customers are allowed between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. and sales in connection with the home occupation are limited to merchandise handcrafted on site or items accessory to a service.
- Signage is regulated by Title 18B PCC, Signs.
- Off-street parking shall include one space per non-resident employee and one for each related vehicle (unless the employee drives the cottage industry vehicle only) in addition to the parking required for the single-family residence.
- Use of hazardous materials or equipment must comply with the requirements of the International Building Code and the International Fire Code.

	Home Occupation	Cottage Industry I	Cottage Industry II
Use permit required	Permitted outright	Administrative Use permit	Conditional Use permit
Size: 50% of total floor area of the living space within the residence, or xx sq. ft. (whichever is less)	500 sq. ft.	1,000 sq. ft.	1,500 sq. ft. ¹
Non-resident employees permitted	0	2	4
Vehicles up to 18,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight permitted	1	2	3
Vehicles over 18,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight permitted	0	0	1
Outside display or storage related to use	No	No	Yes
Landscaping required	No	Yes ^{2,3}	Yes ^{2,4}
Outdoor activities permitted	No	No	Yes
Use or storage of hazardous materials permitted	No	Yes	Yes

If your business requires permitting, you will need the following to apply:

- Residential Application Form
- Floor Plan showing “before” the remodel and “after”, label all rooms and show new appliances.
- Details of any new construction, including fire separations if applicable.
- Site Plan
- Any other requirements from other divisions

¹ Properties greater than five or more acres in size may exceed this at the Hearing Examiner’s discretion

² A Level 3 landscape buffer is required between the cottage industry and neighboring residential dwellings

³ A Level 3 landscape buffer and F1 Fence is required between outside material and vehicle storage and neighboring residential dwellings

⁴ Activities involving outdoor events, such as wedding facilities, are limited to six outdoor events per year with no more than one activity a month; at the Hearing Examiner’s discretion properties greater than 10 acres in size may exceed this