

Mono County Community Development Department

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Building Division

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PACK FIRE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Planning

- **General Planning** – live people try to answer our phone: 760.924.1800, commdev@mono.ca.gov
- **Brent Calloway** (County Planner): 760.924.1805, bcalloway@mono.ca.gov

Building

- **Mike Jones** (Permit Technician): 760.924.1825, mjones@mono.ca.gov
- **Matt Ruppell** (Building Inspector): 760.924.1822, mruppell@mono.ca.gov
- **Inspection Hotline**: 760.924.1827
- **Tom Perry** (Building Official): 760.965.3635, tperry@mono.ca.gov

Environmental Health

- **Jill Kearney** (Environmental Health Director): 760.924.1830, jkearney@mono.ca.gov

Public Works

- **Paul Roten** (Director): 760.924.1811, proten@mono.ca.gov

Cal Fire

- **Matt Edmiston**: 760.387.2565 or 760.937.4325, matt.edmiston@fire.ca.gov
- **Arnold Ramirez**: 760.408.7772, Arnold.ramirez@fire.ca.gov

California State: Housing & Community Development (HCD)

- **David Dance**: 916.599.4388, david.dance@hcd.ca.gov

BUILDING INFORMATION

Does Mono County keep building plans on file for existing homes?

Yes, we sometimes have digital files for existing structures. We're more likely to have plans on file for recent homes (i.e., from the mid- to late 1990s to the present) than older homes (pre-1990s). Contact Michael Jones at (760) 924-1825 for assistance with document requests.

Can a house be built on an existing foundation?

Applicants who wish to use the existing foundation system must have an evaluation of the foundation system performed by a California registered design professional as required by section 405 of the 2022 California Existing Building Code (CEBC). This analysis shall state that the registered design professional has visited the site and investigated the condition of the existing foundation with the specific finding that the damaged building, if repaired to its pre-damage state, would comply with the provisions of the California Building Code (CBC). The evaluation shall also indicate if the existing foundation can adequately support the proposed re-built structure, and that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use.

If I build on an existing foundation, what building codes apply?

Should an existing foundation successfully be evaluated and approved by a registered design professional as described above, then the replacement of original materials and methods of construction is allowed per section 17958.8 of the California Health and Safety Code (H&S) for repairs to existing buildings. Per this statute, the re-built structure must have complied with the codes that were in effect at the time of original construction. So long as the re-build does not continue or become a substandard building, then the codes that were in effect at the time of original construction may be applied. In order to do this, evidence of a Mono County building permit and County-approved plans must be provided by the applicant to establish that the building met the codes in effect at the time when the building was first constructed. This will also help determine the exact build of the existing structure. Mono County permit technician Michael Jones would be the resource for those who want to see if plans are still on record with the County.

When a home is rebuilt, must it be built in compliance with current building codes?

It depends. If the building is not constructed on the existing foundation, and the re-build is a new foundation system supporting a new structure, then it is considered new construction and not a repair as per state building code and must be constructed according to current state building codes. However, if the entire foundation is removed for any reason, and the building had a permit for its original construction, then the building, inclusive of the foundation, can be rebuilt to the original County approved building plans so long as the design does not deviate from the originally approved plans. If the design deviates from the originally approved plans, then the building must conform to current state building codes. The state code in effect now is the 2022 California Residential Code (CRC) which applies to one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures. Buildings other than one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures must comply with the 2022 CBC. **Please note:** New state building codes take effect on 1/1/26, so building permit submittals for new construction received on or after this date will be subject to the 2025 CA Building Codes.

Do I need a permit to re-construct a destroyed outbuilding that houses utilities?

The 2022 CBC section 3103 will allow for a temporary structure to be built without a permit so long as the building's area is no more than 120 square feet and is in use for no more than 180 days. The temporary structure must be one story in height and not be connected to any other building. If the outbuilding is greater than 120 square feet in area, and/or is going to be permanent (more than 180 days), then a permit is required, including a detailed site plan and engineered construction documents.

How is the County determining the amount of square footage that was on my property?

The Building Division will rely on two sources of information: existing building plans on file, and County Assessor data. However, the County will consider the square footage from formal documents, such as insurance papers.

BUILDING PERMITS

Is a demolition permit required for removal of a building or portions of a building that were damaged or destroyed by the fire?

Yes, a demolition permit is required by current state code (the 2022 CRC, section R105.1, and the 2022 CBC, section 105.1). This would include badly damaged foundations and fire burned debris. These permits are typically an over-the-counter permit but could take up to a few days for processing given staff limitations and a heavy workload. All applications for demolition will require Mono County Environmental Health's approval prior to the issuance of a demolition permit relative to state requirements for fire-related demolition operations. Contact Jill Kearney at (760) 924-1845 for more information and for specific state guidelines and standards for the proper demolition and disposal of fire burned debris.

How long do I have to rebuild my permanent residence?

There is no timeline on when you have to rebuild. However, once issued, building permits are valid for three years, so long as progress is being made on construction and regular inspections (one every six months) are being scheduled and conducted by the Mono County Building Division. Additional extensions of time beyond three years are possible with a written request to the Building Official.

What documents are needed for a building permit submittal?

All required plans and documents required for a rebuild permit are identified on our building permit application, which is available on website at <http://monocounty.ca.gov/building>. A complete submittal and detailed building plans often translate into quicker review times. The site plan must also be detailed, as multiple departments and agencies are using the site plan for their reviews that must be completed prior to permit issuance. For buildings that will be re-built on a like-for-like basis on an existing foundation as described above, copies of the County approved plans will be required to be submitted in addition to the other submittal documents. All building permit submittals for fire re-builds will be expedited, with first review comments for building and planning being issued in 5-7 business days excluding shipping time. Reviews and approvals from Mono County Public Works and Environmental Health, in addition to special districts (such as local fire departments and utility districts) are needed prior to permit issuance. Please contact those departments directly to inquire about their respective review times.

Once I have all permit submittal documents ready, how do I submit them for the permit?

Submittals can be accepted and processed at both our Mammoth Lakes and Bridgeport offices. The Mammoth Lakes office is located at 1290 Tavern Road. The Bridgeport office is located in the Courthouse Annex I building (in the same building as the library), at 74 N. School Street. Digital submittals are the preferred method of submittal as digital submittals are much quicker and more efficient than traditional hard copy submittals. Hard copies of the final approved plans stamped by design professionals will be required to issue the permit. Please contact Michael Jones at (760) 924-1825 for specific guidance on building permit submittals.

What are the County fees associated with permits for the Pack Fire?

For property owners who experienced loss due to the fire, permit fees for the reconstruction and repair of structures that were damaged or destroyed are expected to be waived by the Board of Supervisors on December 9. For those needing to start sooner, the Board is expected to reimburse permit fees incurred prior to their approval of the fee waiver. The fee waiver is expected to include building permits; demolition permits and associated electrical permits. Fire district fees are have not yet been waived and are at the discretion of the fire district.

What about school district fees?

Since school district fees are developer fees, these fees do not apply to the reconstruction of homes destroyed in the fire. This exemption would apply for the original square footage of the destroyed structure, plus a maximum of 500 additional square feet. However, if the rebuilt square footage of the new structure exceeds the original square footage plus the extra 500 square feet, then fees would apply to that additional square footage. This exemption may not apply to structures built on a different parcel. School district fees are under the authority of the school district, not the County.

RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLERS

Are residential fire sprinklers required in reconstructed buildings that were destroyed in the fire?

Residential fire sprinkler systems are required per the 2022 CRC, section R313 for new construction where the entire building, inclusive of the existing foundation, is destroyed or

demolished, and there is no evidence of a building permit for the building's original construction. If the entire structure, inclusive of the foundation in addition to the above ground structure, is destroyed or demolished, and there is evidence of a building permit for the building's original construction, then the structure (including the foundation) can be re-built to the originally approved County building plans. For repairs of existing buildings reconstructed on an existing foundation as described above, residential fire sprinklers would not be required if the home did not have a sprinkler system in it from before.

Are there legal exemptions that would allow omission of residential fire sprinkler systems for rebuilt structures?

No. County staff have contacted numerous state agencies and other jurisdictions in the state to research this topic, with the consistent and clear message that sprinklers may not be exempted for new construction. However, as indicated above in this document, a building may be repaired to the codes in effect at the time of original construction so long as the building had a permit at the time of original construction.

Who can assist with the plan preparation and installation of residential fire sprinklers?

There are various designers and contractors who can perform these services. Please contact Building Division staff for contact information.

Do I need a licensed fire protection contractor to design and install the sprinkler system?

No, a fire sprinkler designer may do the design work and furnish plans that would allow flexibility for who would do the installation later in the building phase. However, a licensed C-16 fire protection contractor can prepare plans and do the installation but often will require their client to use them for both the plans and installation.

What types of residential fire sprinkler systems are available?

There are two different types of sprinkler systems to select: An anti-freeze system, and a multi-purpose system. The anti-freeze system is the type that is isolated from the rest of the building's domestic plumbing and provides freeze protection such that heat need not be maintained in the building. The multi-purpose system is a non-anti-freeze system connected to the building's domestic plumbing system and serves sprinkler heads similar to other plumbing fixtures. The multi-purpose system is generally less expensive than the anti-freeze system, and is suitable for primary homeowners, but requires the interior temperature of the building to be maintained at a level that will prevent the pipes from freezing.

PLANNING INFORMATION

What can I build/re-build on my property?

McGee Creek RV Park: The RV Park is unique because it is permitted by both the County and the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). If the rebuild is within a designated RV site that was permitted by HCD, then no permitting from the County is required. RV owners are advised to contact HCD to ensure no other state approvals are required.

For other properties, permitted uses are listed under the land use designation (LUD) for the parcel. Most parcels in the fire area will have a LUD of Single Family Residential (SFR).

In either case, please call or email the Planning Division and we can provide the permitted uses on your property and the applicable development standards. Or, you may look up your LUD on Parcel Viewer (<https://gis.mono.ca.gov/apps/pv/>) and then find the LUD standards in the General Plan Land Use Element (https://monocounty.ca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning_division/page/9617/2020_land_use_element_final_1-9-20.pdf).

Can I live in a tiny home, recreational vehicle (RV) or trailer while cleaning up my property and rebuilding?

In the McGee Creek RV Park, a tiny home, RV, or trailer may be the primary living unit. Once the property is certified for re-occupation, a tiny home or RV may be installed as the main home without any further permits. RV owners are advised to contact HCD to ensure no other state approvals are required. Permit fees are expected to be waived by the Board of Supervisors on December 9.

For other properties experiencing loss, permitting requirements and fees for an RV or trailer on the property during rebuilding is expected to be waived on December 9. The property owner will most likely just need to sign and return the Temporary Emergency Dwelling (TED) standards form, and placement must be verified by Jill Kearney in the Environmental Health Department and Michael Jones in the Building Division. This provision may not be transferred to new ownership and only applies to the owner of the parcel at the time of the fire. Please be advised, however, that once the main home is rebuilt these vehicles can no longer be used as residences and can only be stored as vacant vehicles unless the property is in the McGee Creek RV Park. To initiate approvals, send a written request to place a TED to Brent Calloway.

Can I put a tiny home on wheels or a chassis on my property permanently?

Yes, if the property is in the McGee Creek RV Park. See the questions above and please contact Planning for specifics.

On other properties, Mono County land use regulations currently do not allow a motor vehicle as a residential use and the Building Division has no means or authority to evaluate and determine the safety and livability standards of motor vehicles. Because tiny homes on wheels are licensed by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), they are considered motor vehicles and cannot 1) be distinguished from RVs, 2) be permitted under the California Building Code (CBC) to ensure public health and safety standards, or 3) be converted into real property. If a process involving inspection of the tiny home on wheels was available and approved by the State to certify compliance with the CBC, similar to manufactured homes, then resolutions to the above issues would be possible. However, such an inspection and certification process would be resolved at the state level and is outside Mono County's authority and control.

How long do I have to rebuild my permanent residence?

There is no timeline when you must rebuild. However, the TED approval to live in an RV or trailer onsite provides for up to 3 years to submit a building permit for the main residence and then is valid for another three years to complete construction. The timeframe to submit a building permit can be extended by the Community Development Director based on justification.

What can I do with the TED or RV after my new residence is built, and I have received a Certificate of Occupancy?

In the McGee Creek RV Park, the RV/trailer may also serve as the permanent living unit and would not be considered a TED. It may remain onsite and occupied once installed.

On other properties, the TED can no longer be inhabited on the property once the new residence is cleared for occupancy. It can be stored as a vacant vehicle for personal travel use but not hooked up to utilities and occupied.

What are the setbacks for my property?

Please check your Land Use Designation (LUD) or contact Planning to verify setbacks for your property prior to developing rebuilding plans. Please provide your address or Assessor Parcel Number (APN) if contacting our office. Note that setbacks on properties over an acre are governed by state fire safe standards enforced by CalFire. CalFire setbacks for properties larger than an acre are a minimum of 30 feet from all property lines. There is also a 30-foot setback from all streams, waterways, or mapped irrigation ditches.

What are Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations?

New state law went into effect in 2020 that provides for up to three units on every residential property, as follows:

- A main residential unit.
- A junior accessory dwelling unit (JADU): An attached unit that is no larger than 500 square feet, has cooking facilities, and is contained entirely within an existing single-family structure. A bathroom may be shared with the main residence.
- A detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU): One-bedroom units under 800 square feet or two-bedroom units under 1,000 square feet require only a building permit. Larger units require an additional planning permit (Director Review or Use Permit, depending on size).

What are considered “existing nonconforming” uses?

“Nonconforming” means the existence or use of land, a building, a structure or portion thereof, that does not conform to the regulations of the land development regulations and that lawfully existed at the time the regulations with which it does not conform became effective. Common nonconforming uses include noncompliant setbacks and overhead power connections. For a single-family home or accessory buildings destroyed beyond 50% of value (excluding intentional demolition), the nonconformance may only be reconstructed as originally built if evidence is provided that it was legally permitted. For example, power connections are required to be underground, but overhead connections would be permitted if 1) a previous Director Review permitting overhead lines exists, 2) a previous building permit showing the overhead lines exists, or 3) the structure was built prior to this regulation (before 1991). To request a search of Mono County archives for any potential permitting documents, please contact Brent Calloway or Michael Jones. For all other structures damaged or destroyed beyond 50% of value, the reconstruction must meet General Plan requirements or be permitted under a use permit. For the complete regulations, please see Chapter 34 in the Mono County General Plan (MCGP) Land Use Element.

What are the County fees associated with permits for the Mountain View Fire?

County permit fees for building permits, demolition permits, and planning permits for TEDs have been waived; minor fees collected on behalf of the state are still applicable. This fee waiver only applies to the property owner who experienced a loss due to the fire. Additionally, rebuilding structures destroyed by the fire may be exempt from fire district and school district fees.

What kind of powerlines can be restored to my home?

The Mono County General Plan currently requires all electrical service to be undergrounded from the utility drop point to the pedestal at the residence or well house (Land Use Element Section 11.010.D.) The only exemptions that exist are: 1) if evidence exists that overhead power lines were approved previously via a building permit or director review permit, or 2) the previous residence had been constructed prior to 1991. Otherwise, the owner must apply for a Director Review permit requesting approval of overhead lines under one of the exceptions listed in Chapter 11 (usually economic hardship for residential units) and pay the \$667 processing fee. Temporary overhead service may be allowed via the Building Division.