

Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES)

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Agricultural Buildings

DDES Customer
Information Bulletin #**58****• FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS •**

*Visit the DDES Web site at
www.kingcounty.gov/permits
for more information*

King County DDES has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

For alternate formats, call 206-296-6600.

Agricultural Buildings – Permit Application Requirements and Processing

This bulletin serves as a guide to help customers living in the rural areas of unincorporated King County to understand the requirements for obtaining permits to construct agricultural buildings. A variety of programs and resources are available to assist you during this process.

DDES has formed an Agricultural Review Team that has been working in conjunction with the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Office of Business Relations and Economic Development, Seattle-King County Department of Public Health and other interested agencies, to develop strategies to assist with the unique challenges that agricultural buildings present. Efforts are being made to streamline the review and approval process for these structures while continuing to adhere to the requirements of code compliance for the safety and welfare of King County citizens.

What is an agricultural building?

Agricultural buildings are structures designed for farming and agricultural practices, including but not limited to growing and harvesting crops and raising livestock and small animals. Specific examples of agricultural buildings include

- barns
- greenhouses
- storage buildings for farm equipment, animal supplies or feed
- storage buildings for equipment used to implement farming and/or agricultural practices
- storage buildings for crops grown and raised on site (cold storage)
- horticultural nursery.

The International Building Code classifies these structures as Group “U” occupancy (Utility and Miscellaneous) and further states that these structures “shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment where agricultural products are processed, treated or packaged, nor shall it be a place used by the public.”

Please keep in mind that if the use of the agricultural structure includes the public (such as public riding arenas), the permit may need to be reviewed under more stringent commercial building code standards. See DDES customer information bulletin 8, [Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits](#), for more details on the permit process that would be required for these types of structures.

Does my project require a permit?

If you reside on your farm property, all residential accessory structures 200 square feet or less in floor area do not require a building permit; all other residential structures and any used for commercial purposes require a permit. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) does, however, exclude “temporary growing structures used solely for the commercial production of horticultural plants including ornamental plants, flowers, vegetables, and fruits” that are constructed using a flexible membrane material from requiring a building permit per the State Building Code (for details, see RCW 19.27.065 at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=19.27.065>). A separate clearing/grading permit may be required in this instance.

Can I build a pole building?

Pole buildings often are constructed for agricultural use. Pole buildings are structurally similar to post and beam construction, using repetitive posts in isolated footings. Roof and wall framing systems support the required snow, wind and seismic loads. Pole buildings can be more economical to build and may often be constructed in less time.

However, care must be taken in their design since locations for such buildings are often in areas susceptible to high wind and snow loads. Verifying soil capacities are also critical in the design of embedded columns and footings. Since there is no prescriptive provision for this method of construction in the International Building Code (IBC), King County requires all pole buildings be designed by a professional engineer in accordance with the IBC. Stamped plans and structural calculations from the engineer are required at the time of building permit submittal.

As noted in this bulletin, agricultural buildings can take advantage of reduction in some structural design requirements. Your engineer can help to identify the appropriate allowances. Please contact the Building Plan Review Section at 206-296-6600 if you have any specific questions regarding pole building construction.

Is a farm management plan required?

The King Conservation District (KCD – www.kingcd.org) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS – www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov) partner to provide technical and financial assistance to livestock and crop managers with regard to natural resource management. Working with KCD or NRCS, “cooperators” (owners and/or farm managers who enter into the farm plan process) develop farm management plans to meet their land stewardship goals for each farm as a whole. A farm plan may offer DDES customers a number of additional benefits related to critical areas regulations and permit costs. Such a plan may help property owners determine the best site for the agricultural building, reduce livestock setbacks from streams, and help locate access roads within wetland buffer areas if necessary. In addition, certain agricultural activities may be exempt from the need to obtain clearing and grading permits when undertaken in accordance with an approved farm plan.

What if my farm is located in a flood hazard area?

Thorough research is required to determine what development can occur on property located in flood hazard areas. Typically, new residences are prohibited in the FEMA floodway. However, existing, lawfully established agricultural structures located within the FEMA floodway can be repaired, replaced, remodeled or altered, even if the work qualifies as a substantial improvement under King County Code (KCC) 21A.06.1270, provided the work can meet the

applicable development standards. Please refer to KCC 21A.24.230 to 21A.24.270 to determine if your proposed project meets the necessary requirements. For additional assistance, see DDES bulletin 38, "[Flood Insurance and FEMA](#)," or contact the DDES Flood Inquiry assistance line at 206-296-6606.

How much will my permit cost?

Recent changes to the King County Fee Ordinance allow for reduced permit review fees (one-half of the DDES current hourly review rate) for agricultural buildings located in the Agricultural Production District and also for properties located in the Rural (RA-5, RA-10, etc.) zones, provided that they have an approved farm plan from KCD.

Depending upon the size of the building, proposed use and site-specific conditions, permit fees can vary widely.

Concerns and questions about agricultural buildings and the permitting process for such structures should be directed to Joelyn Higgins, Rural Permit Coordinator, at 206-296-7159 or e-mail joelyn.higgins@kingcounty.gov.

Applying for Your Agricultural Building Permit

Before applying for your agricultural building permit, you must schedule an intake appointment. Call the DDES appointment line at 206-296-6797 to schedule. While every effort is made to schedule appointments within two to four weeks of a request, seasonal issues and customer demand may increase the wait times for intake appointments.

Advanced preparation and planning will greatly improve your permitting experience. Bringing as much of the information needed to the intake appointment, as listed below, will allow your permit to move effectively and efficiently through the process. Assistance is available both before and after your intake appointment. Staff specially trained in the review of agricultural structures and on issues related rural properties can meet with you to discuss your individual needs. However, staff cannot waive regulatory requirements, reschedule your intake appointment to an earlier date, or reduce any review time queues by moving your permit forward in the process.

To get a permit for an agricultural building, customers must provide the following information. All forms are available from the DDES Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits, by calling DDES customer service at 206-296-6600, or at the DDES Permit Center in Renton, WA. A map and directions also are on the DDES Web site.

1. Affidavit for Application form (which includes your property tax account number and legal description of the property)
2. Proof of legal lot (if this is the first structure on the site; see DDES bulletin 2, *Legal Lot*)
3. Site plan on DDES template (see Site Plan Requirements and Example handout)
4. Construction drawings (two copies)
5. Structural calculations (if the plans do not meet prescriptive design requirements)
6. Information on heating systems, fireplaces and stoves (if applicable)
7. Health Department approval (required by issuance for properties serviced by on-site septic systems)
8. Certificate of Water Availability (if served by public water and lot is less than 35,000 square feet)
9. Fees for reviews completed before permit approval (or Agricultural Production District deposit if applicable)
10. Contractor's registration number OR Owner Affidavit (required before issuance)

11. SEPA checklist (15 copies) if structure is 30,000 sq ft or more (except feedlots) in an agricultural zone; 15,000 sq ft or more in all other zones
12. Miscellaneous information necessary to review the application. This may include but is not limited to wetland or geotechnical reports.

Note: Electrical permits are issued by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and plumbing permits are issued by the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health. See the “How to request an inspection” section on page six for more information.

CAUTION: Mail order plans

Mail order plans may appear to simplify the permitting process for you, but these plans usually meet the local codes and ordinances in the jurisdiction where they were developed. Additionally, the drawings may not meet King County Code requirements and local building practices. Property owners should review the mail order plans with someone familiar with King County DDES requirements to ensure that these plans are in compliance or to prepare any modifications before application submittal. Customers may find it necessary to seek professional assistance when using mail order plans.

Special setback requirements for agricultural buildings

- The minimum interior property line setback for any building used to house, confine, or feed swine shall be 90 feet.
- The minimum interior property line setback for any building used to house, confine, or feed any other livestock shall be 25 feet.
- The minimum interior property line setback for any manure storage shall be 35 feet.
- The minimum interior property line setback for any other type of building is established by King County Code sections 21A.12.030 and 21A.12.040.
- More restrictive setbacks may apply for structures on sites impacted by critical areas.

Application Review and Approval Process

Technical assistance and pre-application meetings

After reviewing this bulletin, associated informational forms and instructions, and King County and DDES Web site resources, customers may have additional questions about a proposed design or the permit process for agricultural buildings. DDES offers several methods of assistance before permit submittal. These resources include

- general assistance by DDES Permit Center intake staff for walk-in customers provided throughout the day.
- technical assistance from the various DDES review disciplines as a walk-in service at the DDES office from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Monday through Friday.
- pre-application consultation meetings for more in-depth services and complex projects. See pre-application information and forms on DDES' Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits.
- Rural Permit Coordinator, Joelyn Higgins, at 206-296-7159 or e-mail joelyn.higgins@kingcounty.gov.

Health Department review

Approval by the Seattle-King County Department of Health (SKCHD) is required for ANY improvements proposed on property serviced by an On-site Sewage System (OSS) to ensure the system is adequate and will not be impacted by the new construction (whether or not the proposed structure has plumbing). Customers have the option of applying directly to SKCDH or the application can be routed as part of the building permit process. The King County Health application form is available on the DDES Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits.

Addressing

If this is the first structure on the site, a street address must be assigned to the property. This will become the official site address, and it is critical for fire, life, and safety services not to use any other address from any other document. Contact the DDES address information line at 206-296-6628 if you need assistance with the assigned address.

Fire flow and fire sprinklers

After permit intake, a site plan and particulars about the proposed building will be routed to the King County DDES Fire Marshal Division for review. King County Code 17.08.030 provides an exemption for agricultural buildings from fire flow AND from fire hydrant requirements. This is only for structures classified as Group U occupancy under the International Building Code (IBC) and that conform to the definition of an agricultural building in Appendix C of the IBC. (See page one of this bulletin for a listing of agricultural buildings that are classified as Group U.) Furthermore, these structures must be located outside an Urban Growth Area as designated in the King County Comprehensive Plan. **If the structure does not meet these requirements, a sprinkler system may be required.**

In addition, fire department access roads are required to meet current King County Roads Standards. This includes driveways on private property and requires a minimum width of 20 feet. You may discuss deviations from this requirement by contacting the King County Fire Marshal, John Klopfenstein, at 206-296-6675.

Site visit / reviews

Site reviews are determined upon completion of a site visit by DDES review staff. Site reviews may include but are not limited to drainage, access, wetland, geotechnical, streams, FEMA flood hazard, clearing/grading, shorelines, SEPA, and wildlife protection. Based upon the site visit, the application may be approved without further requirements, conditionally approved with site requirements, or put on hold pending the submittal of additional information. Written requests for such information will be sent directly to the applicant. Site reviews may involve the review and approval of delineations, studies and other technical analysis by licensed professionals and will be reviewed for compliance with rural stewardship, forest, or farm management plans as applicable.

Project coordination and management

After the site visit has been completed, a project determined to be complex may be assigned a project coordinator/manager. The project manager will monitor the permit application progress and fees to ensure accountability. He or she will also serve as your primary point of contact for the review process.

Building plans review

A DDES Plans Examiner reviews all drawings to ensure they meet current building, mechanical, and energy codes (as applicable). The examiner may ask for technical information or supplementary drawings in an effort to complete the review. If required, a correction sheet may be attached to the approved plans. There are some special allowances for agricultural buildings classified as Group U occupancy in the Building Code as listed on page one. These include reduced structural load, reduced exiting requirements, and increases in allowed building areas. Please consult with your design professional for more information about these standards.

Permit approval and issuance

Applicants will be notified via US Mail when the permit has been approved. The notification will include information about any outstanding fees due and all other requirements that may need to be met before permit issuance. Once all of the requirements have been satisfied, your permit and a copy of the approved plans may be picked up at DDES in Renton.

Construction and Inspection Process

All work must be in accordance with the approved plans and permit conditions.

General construction inspection requirements and information

The DDES Building Inspection Section (BIS) provides building and site inspections for agricultural buildings. Inspectors are available from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. and can be reached at 206-296-6630. BIS staff can be reached during normal business hours to answer building inspection questions. It is the responsibility of the applicant and contractor to make inspection requests at the appropriate time and have the approved plans and official permit card on the job site, including final inspection approval.

Preconstruction conference

Some projects have significant site and building concerns such as wetlands, shorelines, floodplain, geotechnical, steep-slope, erosion hazard, drainage, excavation near a property line, etc. A preconstruction conference may be required to address these issues with DDES staff before the start of construction. A notice and condition will be added to your permit package if a preconstruction conference is required. Allow up to two working days after a preconstruction meeting is requested for the meeting to be scheduled.

How to request an inspection

Building inspections. Inspection requests can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days per week either online at <http://inspections.metrokc.gov> or by calling the automated 24-hour inspection request line at 1-888-5-INSPCT (1-888-546-7728). Inspection requests received before 3:00 p.m. on a workday will be scheduled for inspection the following work day.

Plumbing inspections. The King County Health Department performs inspections for plumbing, septic systems, and wells. Contact 206-296-4932 to request these inspections.

Electrical inspections. The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries Electrical Division perform electrical inspections for King County permitted projects. Contact the Bellevue Office at 425-990-1400 or the Tukwila Office at 206-835-1111 to request an electrical inspection.

Site inspections

- **Erosion and sedimentation control (ESC).** All ESC measures must be installed when the site is cleared. ESC measures are identified in a 'Notice to Customers' form which is included in your permit package. This notice is also available at the DDES Permit Center and can be accessed via the DDES Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits. ESC measures must be maintained throughout construction. ESC measures are verified at the first foundation inspection and monitored during all subsequent inspections.
- **Drainage / critical areas inspections.** The King County Surface Water Design Manual (KCSWD) may require the installation of drainage facilities such as infiltration, dispersal, or routing of surface water to an approved facility as appropriate for the size of the structure. Inspections for drainage facilities may be combined with other inspections or may require a separate inspection. In addition, setbacks from critical areas, buffering, and mitigation approvals will also be inspected in the field.

Building inspections

- **Foundation inspection.** The foundation inspection occurs after the building pad excavation has taken place. For concrete foundations, forms and reinforcing steel must be in place. Inspection approval is required before placement of concrete. For pole structures, the holes must be excavated and cleaned out. For pile foundations, special inspection by an approved agency is usually required. At the foundation inspection, inspectors check building placement per the approved plan, setbacks (from property lines, easements, critical areas and buffers, etc.), soil conditions, ESC, critical areas requirements, forms and reinforcing steel, hold downs and special frame anchors, and any other requirements specified in the approved plans and permit conditions.
- **Shear wall inspection.** Shear wall inspections are necessary when a specific structural design for lateral restraint panels is required in the approved plans. The inspection occurs when the framing, hold downs, sheathing, attachment and strapping are in place in accordance with the approved plans. Elements of shear panels should be left exposed until inspected and approved.
- **Framing cover inspection.** The framing cover inspection occurs when construction of the building framing is complete, plumbing and electrical rough-in is completed and approved, and the windows and roofing have been installed (as applicable). Insulation should not be installed at the first framing inspection. Inspectors verify that structural, ordinance and life safety requirements visible at the framing inspection are in conformance with the approved plans. A required fire sprinkler system requires rough-in approval before framing cover approval. A required FEMA Flood Elevation Certificate must be received and approved for elevation requirements before framing cover approval.
- **Energy inspections (if applicable).** Elements of energy inspections include foundation wall and slab insulation; infiltration barriers; wall, ceiling and under floor insulation; windows; gasketing; and whole house fans. Inspectors provide spot check inspections of these elements at the appropriate inspection for conformance with the approved plans and energy code.
- **Revision resubmittals.** Construction of the building and site improvements are required to be completed in accordance with the approved permit, plans and conditions. If changes are required to the design following permit issuance, the modifications need to be approved separately by DDES. Minor field changes should be discussed with your building inspector to determine how and if the change is allowed. Major modifications will typically require submitting a revision permit to Permit Center. A revision permit number is assigned and the revisions are routed to the appropriate review disciplines. Ordinarily, an intake appointment is required for the submittal of a revision.
- **Permit extension.** A King County building permit is valid for one year from the date of issuance. A permit extension is required if all required work is not completed by permit expiration. Permit applicants are notified of the pending permit expiration 30 days before expiration if the permit has not received final inspection approval by that time. Permit extensions will be granted in accordance with King County Code upon payment of the appropriate fees. Contact the DDES Building Inspection Section at 206-296-6630 for more information about the permit extension process.

- **Final inspection.** The final inspection occurs when all work required by the approved plans and permit conditions and applicable codes has been completed. Building elements inspected at the final inspection include the occupancy separation, egress requirements (including stairs, handrails, guardrails, ramps, porches, doors and landings), etc. Site elements inspected at the final inspection include impervious surface, drainage facilities, final site stabilization and completion of all sensitive/critical areas requirements and mitigation including final plumbing inspection approval (if applicable). A required fire sprinkler system or fire access mitigation must have final inspection approval. A required FEMA Flood Elevation Certificate must have final approval by DDES.

Other bulletins that may be helpful

Bulletin 1	Building and Development Permit Telephone Numbers
Bulletin 2	Legal Lot
Bulletin 6	Working with Contractors
Bulletin 8	Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits
Bulletin 10	Residential Building On or Near Waterfront
Bulletin 11	Street Addresses and Road Names
Bulletin 13	Fire System Permits
Bulletin 17A	Zoning Code: Overview and Summary
Bulletin 39	Private Residential Fire Sprinkler Systems
Bulletin 53	Project Management for Building Permits

DDES bulletins are available via the department Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits.

Other telephone numbers that may be helpful

206-296-6600	DDES Customer service
206-296-6797	DDES Permit Center appointment desk
206-296-6600	DDES Site Development Services Section
206-296-6628	DDES Address information line
206-296-6630	DDES Building Inspection Section
206-296-6696	DDES Records Center

Be sure to visit our Web site at:
www.kingcounty.gov/permits



King County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require an accommodation to attend a meeting (two weeks' notice) or require this information in Braille, audiocassette, or large print, please call 206-296-6600 or TTY 206-296-7217.