

# NORTHAMPTON COUNTY



Building Department  
P.O. 538  
Eastville, VA 23347  
Phone: (757) 678-0445  
Fax: (757) 678-0483

## SIGN PERMITS REQUIRED BUILDING CODE INFORMATION AND POLICY FOR REQUIRED BUILDING PERMITS

The construction, erection and installation of signs are regulated by the current edition of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). The USBC, references Appendix H of the current International Building Code.

To assure code compliance, the Northampton County Building Department requires the following information for permits for all regulated signs.

**Sign area definition:** For the purposes of this policy, for two faced (double faced) signs, sign area is the area of one sign face.

**Internally Illuminated Signs:** All internally illuminated signs must comply with the current edition of the National Electric Code, article 600. This section requires that all signs be listed and bear the label of the listing company (i.e.: UL or FM Label), that disconnects be provided and that conductors supplying signs be properly sized. Plans must indicate where the disconnects will be located, and a statement that the sign will be properly “listed”. Electrical permits are required for internally illuminated signs.

**Building Mounted Signs (mounted flush with the structure).** Building permits are not required for building mounted signs smaller than 10 square feet in area.

Plans for building mounted signs requiring a building permit must show the method of attachment to the structure, indicate what the sign will be made of. Plans for signs made of fabric or vinyl material must include the flame spread rating of the material.

**Projecting Signs (projecting from or above a building, supported by the building, including awnings):** Building permits are not required for projecting signs that are smaller than 10 square feet and project less than 54 inches from the exterior wall or roof of a building, and the bottom of which is more than 7 feet above the ground surface when projecting over a sidewalk or public way.

Plans for projecting signs requiring a building permit must comply with the requirements for building mounted signs, but must also include the following additional information. Plans for horizontal projecting signs must include distance to adjacent roads, sidewalks and property lines, as well as the height above the underlying surfaces. Additionally, projecting signs larger than 32 square feet of surface area or higher than 30 feet above the ground, *must include **either** wind load calculations (110 MPH wind speed) or a seal from a licensed engineer or architect.*

**Freestanding Signs – less than 32 square feet in area (one sign face):** Building permits are not required for free standing signs smaller than 10 square feet in area, the top of which is less than 12 feet above the underlying ground surface, provided that they do not extend over a public way or sidewalk.

Plans for freestanding signs requiring a building permit must include the details of the pole(s) and sign footing(s) that will support the sign, and all methods of attachment. All footings and structural members must be capable of safely supporting the loads imposed upon them. This includes wind and ice loading. Footing details must be clear enough for a full plan review. Plans for freestanding signs projecting over a sidewalk or public way must include ground clearance and details of horizontal projection.

**Freestanding Signs – more than 32 square feet in area (one sign face):** Plans for these free standing signs must include the applicable provisions listed above, as well as details of the poles and sign footing. Plans for these signs between 32 and 96 square feet in sign face area *must include **either** wind load calculations (110 MPH wind speed) or a seal from a licensed engineer or architect.* Signs with a face larger than 96 square feet or more than 30 feet above the ground **must** be sealed by a Va. licensed architect or engineer. Plans for freestanding signs projecting over a sidewalk or public way must include ground clearance and details of horizontal projection.

**Inspections:** Building inspections are required by code. It is the permit holder's responsibility to schedule the appropriate inspection. A minimum 24-hour advanced notice is required for inspections. Footing inspections are required for all freestanding signs larger than 32 square feet in sign face area. Final inspections are required for all signs. **Failure to obtain a required inspection is a code violation and a violation of the law.**

**Questions:** If you have a question about the above policy and code requirements, please call the building department (757-678-0445) or email: [mcline@co.northampton.va.us](mailto:mcline@co.northampton.va.us)