MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & INDUSTRY

Department of Labor and Industry
Construction Codes and Licensing Division
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The State of Minnesota adopts a set of construction standards known as the Minnesota State Building Codes (MSBC). The MSBC contains safety requirements relating to structure, mechanical, plumbing, energy, electrical, elevators, manufactured buildings and life safety.

The information in this brochure is for general reference for residential construction projects. Contact your municipal building official regarding permits and specific code requirements for residential construction within your community.

To confirm if your contractor is licensed in Minnesota contact the:

Department of Labor and Industry
Residential Building Contractors
Phone: (651) 284-5065 or 1-800-657-3944
www.doli.stage.state.mn.us/contractor.html
E-mail: DLI.Contractor@state.mn.us

www.doli.state.mn.us
www.mncodes.org

GI012 6-06

Gopher State One Call
Call at least two full business days before you dig.
Phone: (651) 454-0002 or 1-800-252-1166
www.gopherstateonecall.org

PORCHES

Guidelines for planning the construction of a porch.

Permits

Building permits are required for construction of all new porches. Porches that are heated may need to conform to the Minnesota State Energy Code.

Porches must also meet the land use requirements of the community's zoning code. Zoning questions should be directed to the local planning and zoning department.

Permit fees, plan review and inspections

Building fees are established by the municipality. The plan review is done by the building official in order to spot potential problems or pitfalls that may arise. The building official may make notes on the plan for your use. Inspections are performed at various stages of construction to verify code compliance. Actual permit costs can be obtained by calling your local building inspection department with your estimated construction value.

Note: Setbacks from property lines vary depending upon the city and zoning district your home is located in. Some communities have other zoning provisions that may include lot coverage or screening.

Contact the building or planning department in your community for the requirements in your location. This is an important first step in the planning for any porch project.

The building inspector will need the following:

1. Application for permit.
2. Site plan or survey.
3. Floor plan.
4. Section.
5. Elevation.
6. Energy calculation worksheet as required.

Required inspections

1. Footings: After excavation, **but prior to the pouring of concrete!**
2. Framing: To be made after framing is complete and construction is accessible for building inspection and other required rough-in inspections are completed and approved.
3. Energy and insulation.
4. Final: To be made upon completion.
5. Other inspections: In addition to the inspections above, the inspector may require other inspections to ascertain compliance with the provisions of the code or to assist you with your questions or concerns during the construction process.

Construction Codes and Licensing

General building code requirements

a. Footings must be extended to frost depth and located at extremities of the porch or engineering may be required.

b. Wood joists 18 inches or closer to grade or wood beams 12 inches or closer to grade and their supports must be of an approved treated wood or wood with natural resistance to decay (heartwood of cedar or redwood.)

c. Columns and posts in contact with the ground or embedded in concrete or masonry must be of pressure-treated wood approved for ground contact.

d. All porches, balconies or decks, open sides of landings and stairs that are more than 30 inches above grade or a floor below must be protected by a guard not less than 36 inches in height. Open guard and stair railings require intermediate rails or an ornamental pattern that does not permit the passage of a 4-inch-diameter sphere.

e. If a stairway is to be provided, it must be not less than 36 inches in width. Stairways may be constructed having an 8-inch-maximum rise (height) and a 9-inch-minimum run (length). The largest tread rise and tread run may not exceed the smallest corresponding tread rise or run by more than 3/8 inch. Stairway illumination as required by code.

f. Handrails are required on all stairways having four or more risers. Handrails may not be less than 1 1/4 inch nor more than 2 5/8 inches in cross-sectional area. Handrails must be installed not less than 34 inches nor more than 38 inches above the nosing (front edge) of treads and they must be returned to a wall or post.

g. All exterior construction members exposed to the weather shall be of approved wood of natural resistance to decay, such as cedar, redwood or treated wood.

h. **Wall framing:** Studs must be placed with their wide dimension perpendicular to the wall and not less than three studs must be installed at each corner of an exterior wall. Minimum stud size is 2 x 4 and spaced not more than 24 inches on center.

i. **Top plate:** Bearing- and exterior-wall studs need to be capped with double-top plates installed to provide overlapping at corners and at intersections with other partitions. End joints in double top plates must be offset at least 24 inches.

j. **Sheathing, roofing and siding:** Approved wall sheathing, siding, roof sheathing and roof coverings must be installed according to the manufacturer's specifications.

k. **Ice and water barrier:** Two layers of 15-pound roofing felt solidly mopped together or one of the approved ice and water shield underlayment materials must be installed on all roofs over porches.

l. **Roof framing:** Size and spacing of conventional lumber used for roof framing depends upon the roof pitch, span, the type of material being used and the loading characteristics being imposed. Porches must be designed for the snow load required locally. Contact your local inspection department for details. Rafters need to be framed directly opposite each other at the ridge. A ridge board at least 1 inch (nominal) thickness and not less in depth than the cut end of the rafter is required for hand-framed roofs. At all valleys and hips, there also needs to be a single valley or hip rafter not less than two inches (nominal) thickness and not less in depth than the cut of the rafter. Rafters must be nailed to the adjacent ceiling joist to form a continuous tie between exterior walls when the joists are parallel to the rafters. Where not parallel, rafters must be tied to a minimum one-inch by four-inch (nominal) cross tie spaced a minimum four feet on center. A properly sized and supported ridge beam may be used as an alternative to ridge board with ties for a vaulted ceiling (see sample). If manufactured trusses are to be used, submit one copy of truss plans signed by a registered engineer.

m. **Outside meters, wells and septic systems:** If relocation is needed, redesign may be necessary.

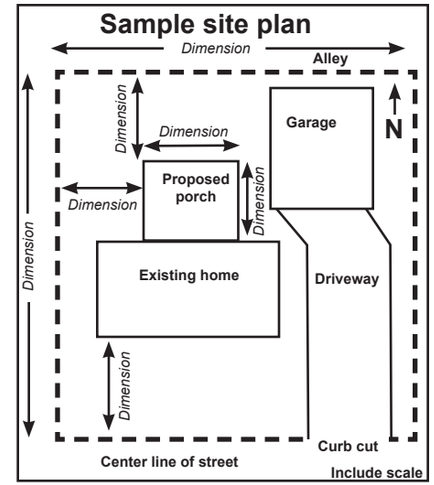
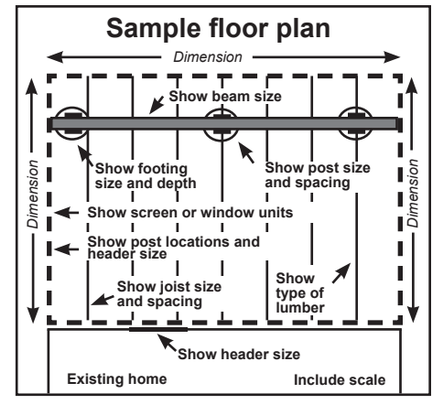
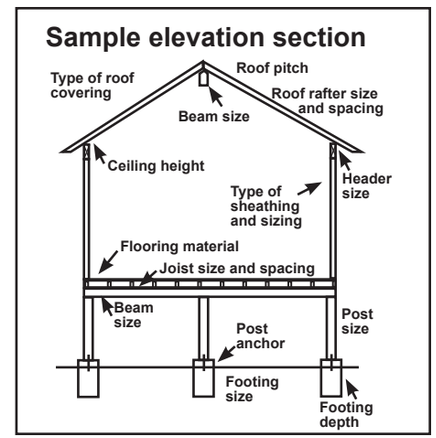
n. **Outside water meter readers:** If relocation is needed, redesign may be necessary.

Plans: Site, floor and elevation section

The text and sample drawings (shown at right) display the minimum detail expected to ensure the permit process can proceed smoothly. Plans do not need to be professionally drawn. However, plans should be drawn to scale and include all of the information requested. The application for permit can be filled out at the time you drop off your plans. Permits can usually be handled by mail by calling the inspection department. **Submit two copies of a certificate of survey or site plan** and building plan drawn to scale indicating the lot dimensions, the location and size of the existing structure(s), and the location and a size of the proposed structure. Indicate the setbacks from property lines of the existing and proposed structure(s). Include the septic-system area and wells if applicable.

Floor plans showing proposed design and materials.

1. Proposed size of porch.
2. Location and size of windows.
3. Size of headers over all doors and window openings.
4. Size, spacing and direction of rafter (roof) materials.
5. Size and spacing of floor joists.
6. Size, location and spacing of posts or applicable foundation details.
7. Type (grade and species) of lumber to be used.

Additional information, such as sectional drawing or elevation, may be required.

Note: Open risers are permitted, provided the opening between the treads does not permit the passage of a four-inch-diameter sphere.