

How To Obtain a Building Permit

By: James L. Buckner, P.E., SECB
CBUGK Engineering

The Florida Building Code (FBC) and the International Building Code (IBC) both require (in chapter one) the permit applicant to **demonstrate** that the construction complies with the code for that specific project. The Building Official or “Authority Having Jurisdiction” (AHJ) is authorized by statute to interpret and enforce the provisions of the code.

The code allows several methods to demonstrate compliance, although a few are usually the most efficient. Think of obtaining a permit as traveling from Jacksonville to Orlando (Permit Land), There are different means of travel (car, truck, plane, boat, bike, etc) and different routes. You choose the one that fits your needs for that specific trip (ie. the project).

The Permit Formula

Product(s)	+	Project	=	Permit
Standards Data		Design and Demonstration		Project Permit
Usually by Manufacturer		Usually by the Permit Applicant		Building Official (AHJ)

The **KEY** to permitting is:
Demonstrating code compliance for that specific project.

Product Data:

The Building Code has over a thousand reference standards pertaining to product specifications and performance in Chapter 35. (Most referenced standards also have referenced standards) All of these codes and standards are revised on various one to seven year plus cycles.

FBC 2007; The IBC 2006 is the Florida base code plus numerous Florida specific additions (and deletions). Dade and Broward Counties are a separate code section, defined as the High Velocity Hurricane Zone (HVHZ)

IBC 2006; All USA States have adopted some or all of the IBC Volumes/Editions. Most states and many local jurisdictions add or modify portions of the IBC model code for their jurisdiction.

Usually product manufacturers have their products tested and/or evaluated (usually by an independent third party) to several of these standards. The standards generally are selected for the intended use(s) of the product, component or system and marketing goals with regard to code compliance issues, which include, but may not be limited to:

- Strength
- Effectiveness
- Fire Resistance
- Durability
- Quality
- Safety

The format of this product data can take many forms, such as;

- Optional Florida Product Approval
- Miami-Dade, Notice of Acceptance (NOA)
- ICC-ES Report
- Modified Product Approval for Specific Project
- One Time, Site Specific NOA
- Certifications (UL, FM, AAMA, Etc...)
- Research Reports
- Test Reports
- Local Approvals
- And More

This type of data is done **initially and then periodically** updated and revised to keep up with code changes.

Design and Demonstration

The design and demonstration of code compliance for construction to a specific project and verification that a product component or system for its intended use meets the provisions of the code is usually the responsibility of the project owner and permit applicant. This demonstration of compliance is **repeated for each project**. The AHJ is the judge of what is adequate demonstration for that project. (Note: All States have numerous AHJ. Florida has approximately 470. Hint: They may not all interpret the various provisions of the code the same way.) Building Officials **Do Not design** projects. Building Officials **Do review** (think grade submittal) documents for evidence of code compliance. This is where most of the confusion, delays and frustration occur. To obtain a “Passing Grade”, the submittal of the proposed construction work (ie documents and/or drawings) should be presented “of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of the work proposed and show in **detail** that it **will conform** to the provisions of this code and relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations as determined by the Building Official”. (FBC, 2007 Section 106.1.1) and (IBC is very similar). The standards and evaluation data is your transportation vehicle and the demonstration submittal is your planned route to Permit Land.

Product Permit:

So there you have it in a general nutshell. Start with recognized product standards and evaluation data; submit concise project design documents for specific code compliance and the AHJ can effectively do their job.

Editorial Notes:

Generally the more data options a manufacturer does “one time” on product standards and evaluations, the less time and money it will take to demonstrate compliance. In most cases that will translate into lower “in-place” cost, which will make the product or system more competitive in the marketplace.

References:

- Memorandum: Acceptance of Products and Verification of Compliance, Dec 6, 2006
Raul L. Rodriguez, AIA Chairman
Florida Building Commission
- Florida Building Code 2007
- International Building Code 2006
- Florida State Product Approval Rule 9B-72 (May 2009)