



Requirements for Sheds, Carports and Garages

Your guide to the permit and inspection process

**Chesterfield County, Virginia
Providing a FIRST CHOICE
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Public Service**

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**Building Inspection Department
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Fax: 751-4713
www.chesterfield.gov/bi**

**Planning Department
Phone: 748-1050
Fax: 717-6295**



What is a shed?

The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code defines a **shed** as a structure that has all of the following characteristics:

1. It is a detached, one-story, structure.
2. It is used for tool storage, a playhouse or similar use.
3. It does not exceed 10 feet tall at the eave height.
4. The maximum distance that it can be off the ground is 18 inches. The structure is made of light-frame construction, with vertical and horizontal structural elements primarily formed by a system of repetitive wood or light-gauge metal framing members. New product technology has also introduced plastic panel products as an acceptable tool-storage solution.

A structure that does not comply with these criteria will be treated as any other **detached structure**.



Shed **detached structure**

What is a carport?

A **carport** is a structure open on at least two sides used generally for covering vehicles. It may be attached to the house or be free standing. If the structure does not open on at least two sides, it shall be considered a garage and will have to comply with all code requirements for garages.

Carport



Garage



When is a permit required?

Sheds 257 square feet or larger, carports and light- framed garages, all require permits.

If the shed does not exceed 256 square feet (examples: 12 ft. X 20 ft. or 16 ft. X 16 ft.), it does not require a **building permit**. However, some constraints still apply:

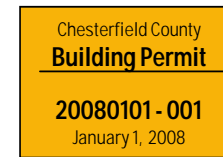
- ✓ The shed must be anchored to the ground.
- ✓ If it has electricity, it will require an **electrical permit**.
- ✓ The shed must comply with Zoning Ordinance setbacks from all property lines. Prior to placing the structure on the lot, contact the Planning Department at 748-1050 for setback and easement requirements. No buildings shall be placed in a flood plain.



Permit not required



Permit required



What permits do I need?

The code makes no distinction between:

- A prefab structure that is delivered on-site completely assembled and a structure that is erected on-site
- A metal, wood or panelized building.

The following permits are required:

- ✓ A **building permit** is all that typically is required. The person who assumes ultimate responsibility, either the homeowner or the contractor, must apply.
- ✓ An **electrical permit** will be required if the structure will have electricity.
- ✓ A **mechanical or gas permit** may be required if the structure will be heated mechanically.
- ✓ A **plumbing permit** will be required if the structure will have water.



What is the process?

The code has more restrictive requirements as the detached structure gets larger, but the process is the same:

1. Prior to applying for the permit, contact the Planning Department for setback and easement requirements.
2. Gather all of the necessary documents listed below.
3. Complete the permit application(s).
4. Pay the required fee.
5. The documents will be reviewed by multiple county departments and once they are satisfied, the permit will be issued.
6. After receiving the permit, you can begin construction.
7. Call for the required inspection(s) as you proceed.
8. Obtain an approved final inspection prior to use.

What documents are required?

The following construction documents must accompany the permit application:

1. **Plot plan** — showing the proposed setback distances between the structure and all property lines and the distance to other structures on the property.
2. **Construction drawings** — two sets are required, including:
 - ✓ Dimensioned floor plan,
 - ✓ Front and side view elevations or isometric sketch,
 - ✓ Detailed drawings showing the structural framing, including member sizes and spacing,
 - ✓ Details showing how the structure will be secured to the ground — the manufacturer's anchoring details must be provided.
 - ✓ Engineered sealed plans for metal buildings.

Note: If the structure is purchased, be sure you get a copy of the plans to your specific unit, i.e., not generalized plans. The plans may be provided by the seller or manufacturer, similar to the example below.



What are the permit fees?

Information concerning fees is available on our Web site www.chesterfield.gov/bi or by calling the Building Inspection Department and is subject to annual change.

How long does it take to get the permit?

The permitting process requires approval of:

- ✓ Building Inspection Department
- ✓ Planning Department
- ✓ Environmental Engineering Department
- ✓ Health Department (if on well or septic)

You can find out the permit status from the [ELM Portal](#) website by entering the permit number. When your construction documents are in order and you have received approval from all of these departments, a **building permit** and one set of **approved field plans** will be mailed to you, you may pick them up at the Building Inspection Department, or under the attachments on the ELM Portal, depending on how the permit was applied for.

What are the code requirements?

No Permit Required (0-256 sq. ft.)

A one-story detached structure, between 0-256 square feet, used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses, or similar uses. (examples: 12 ft. X 20 ft. or 16 ft. by 16 ft.) These structures must be built in accordance with the code and be anchored to the ground – typical anchorage systems include auger type or strap type tie-downs. Setback requirements, determined by the planning department, must be met.



Light-Frame Construction (257-600 sq. ft.)

A light frame accessory structure (shed, carport or metal structure*) that is between 257 and 600 square feet (examples: 20 ft. x 20 feet or 30 ft. X 20 ft.) and an eave height less than 10 feet, must be built in accordance with the code and have a permanent foundation system at least 12 inches below final grade. Typical permanent foundation systems include concrete piers (12 in. by 12 in. by 8 in. thick) or continuous concrete footings.

Light frame construction is defined as “construction whose vertical and horizontal elements are primarily formed by a system of repetitive wood or cold-formed steel framing members.”

Other Than Light Frame (257-400 sq. ft.)

An accessory structure of other than light framed construction (shed, carport or metal structure*) that is between 257 and 400 square feet (examples: 14 ft. x 20 feet or 30 ft. X 20 ft.) and an eave height less than 10 feet, must be built in accordance with the code and have a permanent foundation system at least 12 inches below final grade. Typical permanent foundation systems include concrete piers (12 in. by 12 in. by 8 in. thick) or continuous concrete footings.

All Other Structures

A shed, carport or metal structure* that is over 400 square feet of other than light framed construction, or over 600 square feet of light framed construction, or has an eave height greater than 10 feet, must be supported on continuous footings at least 18 inches below finished grade.

*Footings/connections for metal structures to be installed per the approved engineered design on manufacturer’s/suppliers plans.

Special considerations

For light-framed metal structures, the engineer sealed manufacturer’s literature shall clearly indicate the number, size and spacing of anchors, or footing/foundation construction.

A “pole barn” is interpreted to mean a structure on a working farm used primarily in the handling of livestock or storage of agricultural products and/or related implements. Similar structures not on working farms will be considered detached structures.



Premanufactured wood structures are delivered to the site and off loaded. Typically, they have wood floor sheathing on pressure treated runners. The anchorage requirements vary by size (see previous requirements).

Any two-story building will automatically be treated as a detached structure and require a continuous footing.



What inspections are required?

The following inspections are typically required:

1. Footing inspection (if the structure will be over 256 square feet)
2. Slab inspection (if the structure will have a concrete floor)
3. Framing inspection
4. Electrical inspection (if applicable)
5. Mechanical and/or gas inspection (if applicable)
6. Plumbing inspection (if applicable)
7. Final inspection by Building Inspection Department and any of the other county departments

There are three ways to request inspections:

1. Through the ELM Portal <https://aca-prod.accela.com/CHESTERFIELD/Default.aspx>
2. Call (804) 751-4444, the automated Interactive Voice Response system, and request an inspection.
3. Call (804) 751-4990 to speak to a customer service rep.



Prior to digging, call

Miss Utility — Dial 811

Miss Utility is a free service that will locate all member utilities that may have facilities in your proposed area of excavation. Notification must be made a minimum of 48 hours prior to any excavating.