



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Health Service Regulation  
Construction Section

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<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/>

## **When is a Construction Section Plan Review Required?**

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Prior to beginning construction or remodeling work, owners of facilities licensed by the Division of Health Service Regulation must submit plans and specifications to the Construction Section for review and approval.

The following types of construction and remodeling work shall be submitted to the Construction Section for review:

- A new facility or portion of a new facility
- An addition to an existing facility
- A change in the occupancy of an existing licensed facility
- An existing unlicensed facility or portion of an existing unlicensed facility to be converted to a licensed facility
- The remodeling of an existing facility which includes but is not limited to the following:
  - Changes in the physical structure of the facility
  - Changes in wall locations (moving or removing of walls, adding or moving doors, rerouting of exits, etc.)
  - Alterations to plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems (changes in piping, ventilation rates, duct work, dampers, electrical distribution systems, etc.)
  - Alterations to the fire alarm fixtures or systems
  - Alterations to automatic sprinkler fixtures or systems and renovations to other automatic fire-extinguishing equipment or systems
  - Adding or modifying the locking of doors within the means of egress by manual or electronic means
  - Changes in the proposed use, size or location of licensure required rooms within a facility
  - Changes in commercial kitchen or laundry layouts that impact ventilation systems and fire and life safety codes

Facility owners do not need to submit repair or maintenance work to the Construction Section for review. Examples of repair and maintenance work which does not require Construction Section review are listed below:

- Replacing like components of an existing system with compatible devices
- Repair or replacement of damaged construction, if the repair or replacement is performed according to construction documents approved by Construction Section within the past three years
- Exterior repairs or improvements (new roof, siding, walkways, parking lots or landscaping)
- Cosmetic changes that do not affect resident activities, services, or care and are performed in accordance with the current edition of the building code
- Painting, wallpapering, and installation of cabinets, counter tops, and similar finish work

During any construction, remodeling, repair or maintenance work, occupied areas of the facility shall be protected from demolition and construction activities. This includes control of dust, excessive noise/vibration, and leaks. All required means of egress and required corridor widths must be maintained throughout the work. This includes maintaining safe egress to the public way and fire truck and other emergency vehicle access to the facility. In addition, all essential mechanical, electrical, and life safety systems (including sprinkler systems) affecting occupied areas of the facility shall be kept operational.

The following definitions shall apply to this document:

1. "Addition" is an extension or increase in floor area or height of a building.
2. "Alteration" is any change or modification in construction or use of an existing building. Any construction or renovation to an existing structure other than repair, maintenance or addition.
3. "Repair" is reconstruction or renewal of any part of an existing building for the purpose of its maintenance;
4. "Remodeling" means alterations, renovations, rehabilitation work, repairs to structural systems, and replacement of building systems.

5. "In-kind" is defined as an identical replacement/installation, like-for-like, wire-for-wire. (Not just similar in nature or purpose.)

Examples of minor construction or remodeling work not requiring a Construction Section review are listed below:

1. Parking, paving, landscaping, general sidewalk and fence installation that will not affect safe egress to the public way, access by fire trucks/emergency vehicles and a clear path to all essential mechanical, electrical, plumbing and life safety equipment.
2. Parking lot lighting provided by utility company.
3. Re-roofing, gutter and downspouts.
4. Replacement in-kind of handrails, casework, countertops, and shelving (not interfering with sprinklers).
5. Finish work including: painting, wall coverings, millwork, and window treatment.
6. Replacement of floor finishes and carpeting (with critical radiant flux of not less than Class I or II) in non-exit access corridor areas.
7. Installation of room labels and building signage.
8. Replacement in-kind (rating and type) of doors, automatic closers, locksets and latching hardware.
9. Maintenance and repair of a piece of equipment or replacement of a component of the same piece of equipment.
10. Replacement in-kind water heaters and plumbing equipment.
11. Replacement in-kind surface mount electric light fixtures on normal power in non-patient care areas.
12. Installation of receptacles in non-patient care areas.
13. Replacement in-kind of vending machines, ice makers and portable equipment; the replacement of computers, music, telephone, cable, or paging systems not to exceed requirements in the NC Electrical Code.
14. Replacement in-kind laundry equipment requiring no upgrade in power circuits, ventilation, or fire resistance-rated protection of exhaust ducts.
15. Replacement in-kind exit signs.
16. Device for device replacement of fire alarm system devices (must have approval of local fire official).
17. Repair or maintenance of fire stop material.
18. Repair or maintenance of fire, smoke, and ceiling radiation dampers.
19. Replacement in-kind of a bathroom exhaust fan (including integral ceiling radiation damper).
20. Replacement of small unit HVAC thermostat to programmable or digital. If thermostat serves the manual emergency stop function of NCMC 405.2, this capability must be maintained.
21. Occasional replacement in-kind of damaged sprinkler heads and piping (by a licensed Sprinkler Contractor)
22. The addition and replacement of (non-electrified) furnishings

If you are not sure whether your project should be submitted for plan review and approval, please call the DHSR Construction Section at (919) 855-3893 and ask for the Help Desk architect or engineer. The Help Desk architect or engineer will help you determine whether your project should be submitted.

For emergency situations where the alteration work needs to be completed quickly before plans can be submitted and reviewed, contact the Construction Section Chief Steve Lewis or Assistant Chief Marjorie Acker at (919) 855-3893. These situations will be handled on a case by case basis.

All construction, remodeling, repair and maintenance work shall be in compliance with all state rules, federal regulations and local codes and ordinances enforced by city, county, or other state jurisdictions. Please contact your local Code Enforcement Official for their plan review requirements