



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

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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 specification to the Construction Section for review and approval. For more information on the submittal process, please review our [Construction Project Plan Submittal and Review Guide](#).

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.) This should include all equipment replacements, such as chillers, boilers, AHU, fan coil units in nursing homes, generators, and transfer switches.
 - Alterations to the fire alarm fixtures or systems. This includes replacing devices as “like for like.”
 - Alteration to automatic sprinkler fixtures or systems and renovations to other automatic fire-extinguishing equipment or systems. This includes replacing devices as “like for like.”
 - Alterations to nurse call systems. This includes replacing devices as “like for like.”
 - Adding or modifying the locking of doors within the means of egress by manual, electronic, or magnetic system 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:

- Repair or replacement of damage construction, if the repair or replacement is performed according to construction documents approved by **the Construction Section within the past three (3) years**
- Exterior repairs or improvements (new roofing, siding, walkways, parking lots or landscaping)
- Cosmetic changes that do not affect resident activities, rooms, services, corridors, or care and are performed in accordance with the current edition of the Building Code
- Painting and wallpapering in non-patient corridors, 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 shall 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. Finished work including painting, wall coverings, millwork and window treatment **in non-exit access corridor areas and including patient rooms.**
6. Installation of room labels and building signage.
7. Replacement in-kind (rating and type) of doors, automatic closers, lockset and latching hardware.
8. Replacement in-kind water heaters and plumbing equipment.
9. Replacement in-kind surface mount electric light fixtures on normal power in non-patient care areas.
10. 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 of the NC Electrical Code.
11. Replacement in-kind laundry equipment requiring no upgrade in power circuits, ventilation, or fire resistance-rated protection of exhaust ducts.
12. Replacement in-kind exit signs.
13. Repair or maintenance of fire stop material.
14. Replacement of small unit HVAC thermostat to programmable or digital. If thermostat serves the manual emergency stop function of NCMC Section 405.2, this capability must be maintained.
15. 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, Construction Section Chief Jeff Harms or Assistant Chief Tammy Sylvester 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 and permitting requirements.