

FACT SHEET FOR EMPLOYERS

California Department of Industrial Relations

Division of Occupational Safety & Health | SEPTEMBER 2026



What Employers Need to Know – Construction Activity Permits

When are Permits Required?

Some construction activities involve a high risk of serious injury and require a permit from Cal/OSHA before work can begin. This is required by the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, [section 341](#). When applying for a permit, employers must provide information so Cal/OSHA can evaluate workplace safety. Permits must be obtained before work begins by the person or entity responsible for the project and by employers performing the covered activities. A permit is issued only after it is shown that the jobsite will be safe and healthful for employees.

Different Types of Permits

Cal/OSHA issues two types of permits:

- **Project Permits:** A permit used for one job that expires when the project ends. The permit fee is \$50.
- **Annual Permits:** A permit for employers to perform a certain required construction activity throughout the year. Employers must notify Cal/OSHA at least 24 hours before starting each permit-required activity. The permit fee is \$100 and must be renewed each year.



Permit Required Activities

Certain construction activities will trigger the requirement for different permits. For many activities, the permit requirement is based on the intended height of the structure not the height where work is being performed. Different employers on the same project may need different permits depending on the work they perform.

Other employers on the same project often need Annual Permits for their specific activities.

Project Permits (Typically held by the Project Administrator)	
Activity	Trigger Heights
Demolition or dismantling of a building or structure	More than 36 feet
Constructing or erecting a structure	Intended to be more than 36 feet
Fixed tower crane erection, climbing, or dismantling	Applies to all regardless of height
Underground use of diesel engines in mines or tunnels	Applies to all regardless of depth

“Project Administrator” means the person or entity with overall responsibility at the jobsite for planning, managing, or completing a project that involves building or demolishing a structure. Examples include general contractors, prime contractors, owner-builders, joint ventures, and construction managers.

Annual Permits (Held by employers performing the work)	
Activity	Trigger Heights
Demolition or dismantling work	More than 36 feet
Structural steel or structural member erection	Structure intended to be over 36 feet
Metal decking or other decking material installation	Structure intended to be over 36 feet
Curtain wall, precast panel, or fascia installation	Structure intended to be over 36 feet
Forming or placing concrete on structures	Structure intended to be over 36 feet
Structural framing or panelized roof systems	Structure intended to be over 36 feet

(continued on next page)

Permits are not required if the work is limited to placement of reinforcing bars in concrete or installing interior partitions.

Activities That May Use Either a Project or Annual Permit	
Activity	Trigger Heights
Trenches or excavations	When a worker must enter an excavation that is 5 feet deep or more
Scaffolding, vertical shoring, or falsework	Intended to be more than 36 feet in height

Requirements to Obtain a Permit

- A valid and applicable contractor license issued by the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB).
- Current workers' compensation insurance.
- A knowledgeable representative of the employer who understands the applicable safety requirements.
- Required safety and health programs for the work being performed.

How To Obtain a Permit

1. Contact the Cal/OSHA District Office with jurisdiction to process the permit.
2. Submit a complete permit application.
3. Provide the requested documents.
4. Pay the permit fee with a check or money order made payable to the State of California. No cash is accepted.
5. Attend a permit safety conference.
6. Do not begin work until the permit is issued.

Starting permit-required work before obtaining a permit is a violation and may result in a minimum civil penalty of \$1,250.

Common Mistakes

Employers frequently make the following mistakes:

- Starting permit-required work before obtaining a permit.

- Assuming the general contractor's permit covers all employers on the project. Employers performing permit-required activities need their own permits.
- Assuming the project administrator does not need a project permit because the contractor performing the work already has an annual permit. The project administrator and the contractor performing the permit-required activity must each obtain their own permit.
- Waiting until the last minute to apply for a permit. Employers should begin the permit process well before work is scheduled to start.
- Assuming a permit is not required because work is currently below 36 feet. A permit is still required if the structure will exceed 36 feet and must be obtained before starting the permit-required activity.
- Annual permit holders failing to notify Cal/OSHA at least 24 hours before starting permit-required work.



More Information

This fact sheet only provides a brief overview of the requirements for construction activity permits.

For more information, see the resources below:

- [FAQ page — Permit Requirements for Construction Activities](#)
- [Article 2 — Permits — Excavations, Trenches, Construction and Demolition and the Underground Use of Diesel Engines in Work in Mines and Tunnels](#)
- [Cal/OSHA Enforcement Office Search webpage](#)

