

Quick Guide to Business Repairs

The Department of Buildings is committed to enhancing the safety and quality of life for residents and businesses of the City of Chicago through permitting, inspections, trade licensing, and enforcement of the Chicago Construction Codes. For businesses responding to damage from an unexpected event, the Department offers the following guidance on repairs:

Securing your building

If windows, doors, or exterior walls have been damaged, take steps to secure the building as soon as possible. Contact your landlord and insurance company as they may be able to recommend a board-up company. If you are unable to find a board-up company to assist with securing your building, please email NBDC@cityofchicago.org. A **permit is not required** to temporarily board up a building, remove trash, debris, or broken glass, or to clean off or paint over graffiti on your building. As part of the board-up process, please make sure any debris is removed from the public sidewalk.

Plywood board up material may be left in place for up to six months. Plywood may be left unfinished, painted a solid color, painted with an art mural, or painted with a temporary on-premises business identification sign. This temporary business signage is limited to 2 square feet per foot of street frontage. Advertising for businesses, products, or events not offered on site, including advertising the name of the board-up company, is **not allowed** without a sign permit.



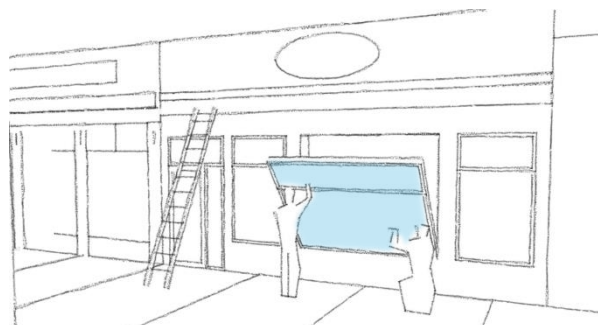
A business with 25 feet of street frontage (measured along the curb) is allowed up to 50 square feet of temporary business signage. The area of signage is determined by drawing an imaginary rectangle around all the letters, numbers, and logos on the sign.

Repairing the exterior of your building

A permit is **not required** to replace glass in existing exterior window or door frames.

If your building is neither a Chicago Landmark nor in a Chicago Landmark District (*details below*), a permit is **not required** to replace ground level or first floor windows and exterior doors, including the glass and frame. Replacement windows and exterior doors must be the same size, type, and configuration. A permit is always **required** to change the way a door or window opens or to permanently fill in a window or door opening.

For nonresidential buildings a permit is always **required** to repair exterior brick or siding, repair or replace roofing, repair or replace upper-level windows, or to install a permanent fence. In most cases these types of nonstructural repairs are eligible to use the [easy permit program](#). Structural repairs to the exterior of a building are eligible to use the easy permit program if the scope of repairs is detailed in a letter signed and sealed by a licensed architect or structural engineer. An electrical permit (obtained online by your electrical contractor) is required for electrical repairs.



A permit is not required for ground-level window replacement (same as existing) if your building is not a Chicago Landmark or in a Landmark district.

If your building is a Chicago Landmark or in a Chicago Landmark District, a permit is required for most exterior repairs. To determine if your building is a Landmark, visit chicago.gov/zoningmap. Landmarks and Landmark Districts are indicated by diagonal red lines on the map. Please contact landmarks@cityofchicago.org for assistance or more information.

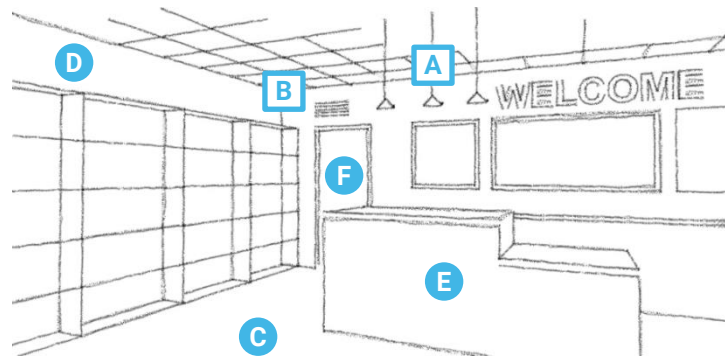
Repairing the interior of your building

If your building has sustained **fire damage**, email Chief Building Inspector Jorge.Herrera@cityofchicago.org to request a fire damage inspection. A building inspector will visit your building to determine if it has sustained structural damage. You may need to provide proof of this inspection to your insurance company.

For most nonstructural interior repairs that do not involve heating, cooling, ventilation, plumbing or electrical systems, a building permit is **not required**. A permit is **not required** to repair up to 1,000 square feet of plaster or drywall, or to replace any area of ceiling tiles. A permit is **not required** to repair or replace wall or floor finishes, such as paint, tile, or carpet. A permit is **not required** to install shelves, cases, racks, and counters up to 7 feet tall. A permit is **not required** to replace interior doors that are not required to be fire-resistance rated. (Doors to stairways, utility rooms, or between tenant spaces may be required to have a fire-resistance rating.)

A building permit is **required** to repair plumbing, heating, ventilation, or air-conditioning systems, or to repair built-in refrigerated display cases. In most cases these types of nonstructural repairs are eligible to use the easy permit program. The easy permit application must include a letter describing the scope of repair work prepared by the contractor who will be performing the repairs. Easy permits are usually issued within a few days.

An electrical permit (obtained online by your electrical contractor) is **required** for electrical repairs.



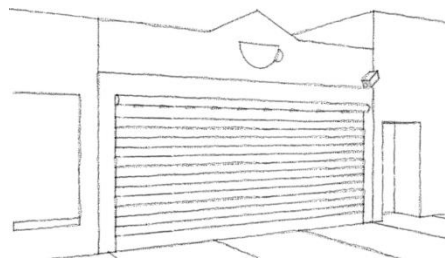
A permit is required to repair or replace [A] lighting, [B] ventilation, or plumbing (not shown). A permit is not required to repair or replace [C] flooring, [D] wall and ceiling finishes, [E] counters and shelving up to 7 feet tall, or [F] non-fire-rated doors.

Making changes to your building

A standard building permit, based on drawings prepared by a licensed architect or engineer, is **required** for most types of interior structural repairs or to reconfigure, walls, doors, stairs or exits for the interior of your building. A standard building permit is **required** to install a new security gate or to reconfigure the doors or windows for your building. The drawings will be reviewed to make sure the proposed work meets zoning, fire and life safety requirements.

An electrical permit (obtained online by a licensed electrical contractor) is **required** for installation of a security alarm system, wired security lighting, or wired security cameras.

A permit is **not required** to install wireless battery-powered security cameras or security lighting.



A full building permit (with plans) is required to install a new security gate.
An electrical permit is required to install wired security cameras or security lighting.

Use licensed contractors

Licensed general contractors must carry insurance and have demonstrated a commitment to following the Municipal Code. When possible, get multiple written proposals or bids before selecting a contractor. Lists of licensed general contractors, electrical contractors, plumbing contractors and mason contractors are available at chicago.gov/buildings.