

Local Licenses and Regulations

When starting a business in any city, town, or village, it is imperative to contact the local unit of government responsible for licensing local businesses. You may be directed to other municipal departments to apply for other necessary permits or additional licenses depending on your business or industry.

Zoning - Home Occupancy Permit

Before selecting a location for your business, make sure the area is zoned for business and not just residential/agriculture. Check with your local zoning office to see that the location may be used for what you plan to do.

If you plan to work out of your home, you may be required to file a home occupancy permit. This is often handled by the town clerk. There may also be restrictions on the type of businesses that may operate out of the home. In general, if you plan on sending or receiving large amounts of material that increases traffic to your home address, expect to encounter more licensing requirements or zoning restrictions.

Industry-Specific Local Licenses

Depending on the city or town, some businesses may need a special license to operate. State law grants local authorities the power to issue these types of licenses. In addition to local licenses, some businesses may also need state-level licensing. For example, a restaurant owner will need to apply for a liquor license through the local Alcohol Review Board and obtain an Alcohol Beverage Permit from the state Department of Revenue's Business Tax Registration application form.

Building Permits

If you are building from scratch in a business-zoned area or expanding an existing building, you will be required to obtain a building permit, which triggers a number of local and statewide regulations.

State building codes require that building construction conforms to the Wisconsin Commercial Building Code. The Department of Commerce, Division of Safety and Buildings, reviews building plans for public buildings and places of employment prior to construction for compliance. These plans include the review of all commercial buildings, plumbing, heating, fire sprinkler and alarms, and private onsite wastewater treatment systems. Online information building code information and plan reviews can be obtained at www.commerce.state.wi.us/SB/SB-DivCodesListing2003.html

Local building officials perform field enforcement of the regulations to ensure that the building complies with code. A local building official can be reached through the municipal clerk's office to ensure compliance with regulations affecting construction, alterations, demolitions, occupancy, and use of buildings.

Fire Prevention

Compliance with the Wisconsin State Fire Prevention Code is necessary in order to protect life and property from the hazards of fire or explosion. The chief of the local fire department are responsible for inspecting all public buildings and places of employment within the department's territory.