When do I need a building permit?

The International Building Code adopted by the City requires that you get a permit before doing any:

a. construction, enlargement, alteration, repair, movement, demolition, or changing the occupancy of any building or structure; and  
b. installation, enlargement, alteration, repair, removal, conversion, or replacement of any electrical, gas, mechanical, or plumbing system.

Some exceptions to this rule include:

• One-story detached residential accessory buildings used as a storage or tool shed, playhouse or similar use. They must be 120 square feet or less in size, no taller than ten feet, and must be placed on the rear half of a lot with at least a three-foot setback from side and rear property lines.  
• Interior movable cases, counters and partitions not over 5'9" high.
• Fences - Fences less than or equal to six (6) feet in height and not obstructing the clear line of vision of vehicular traffic approaching the location from any street or driveway. Fences greater than six (6) feet in height must meet applicable setback standards and require a building permit and zoning certification.
• Retaining walls and rockeries no more than four feet tall. Please call the Community Development Department to assure that permits are not needed.
• Platforms, decks, walks and driveways - Ask the Permit Counter staff or call (253) 512-2261.
• Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
• Residential window awnings - Ask the Permit Counter staff or call (253) 512-2261.
• Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one- and two-family dwellings.
• Prefabricated residential swimming pools - Ask the Permit Counter staff or call (253) 512-2261.

Where can I apply for a permit?

The Permit Counter is located on the second floor of Lakewood City Hall, located at 6000 Main Street SW. Forms are available on line that can be printed out and filled in prior to coming to City Hall. Contact the Permit Counter staff at (253) 512-2261 for more information.

Do I have to make an appointment with the Permit Counter staff?

No. The Permit Counter is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, we ask that you arrive no later than 4:00 p.m. in order to assure processing of your application. Please keep in mind that if you are applying for multiple permits additional time will be required.

What are the fees for a permit?

The fees are variable depending on the type and scope of work. Fees for various permits can be found in the City’s Master Fee Schedule. Total fees for a project will be calculated at the time a permit application is submitted. Contact the Permit Counter staff at (253) 512-2261 for more information.

Can I start work before my permit is issued?
Work on a project cannot legally begin before a permit is issued. Please obtain all necessary permits before beginning construction.

**Can I do the work myself, or do I need to hire a contractor?**

Property owners may perform work on their own property. If a contractor is used, the contractor must have a state contractor's license (and/or appropriate state specialty license) and a City of Lakewood business license.

**How do I arrange for an inspection?**

After your permit has been issued, you may schedule an inspection 24 hours or more in advance of the day you would like the inspection to be performed. Please call the inspection line at (253) 512-2266 and leave your recorded message, providing all the information as directed; or arrange for an inspection online.

**Does the City of Lakewood issue electrical permits?**

If your electric service provider is Lakeview Light and Power or Puget Sound Energy, electrical permits can be obtained from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). You may contact them by calling (253) 596-3808 or you may visit them at 950 Broadway in Tacoma or at their website.

If your electric service provider is Tacoma Public Utilities, please visit their Permits webpage, or contact them at (253) 502-8277.

Find your electrical carrier with the Electrical Provider Boundaries Map.

**Do I need a permit for a shed?**

Non-vehicular storage structures less than one hundred twenty (120) square feet and less than ten (10) feet in height, when placed on property where the owner resides do not require a building permit or zoning certification. However, they must be placed on the rear half of a lot with at least a three-foot setback from side and rear property lines.

**Do I need a permit for a patio cover or carport?**

Yes. You will need to obtain a building permit and setbacks from the property line still have to be observed.

**Do I need a permit for a fence?**

Fences less than or equal to six (6) feet in height and not obstructing the clear line of vision of vehicular traffic approaching the location from any street or driveway do not require a permit. Fences greater than six (6) feet in height must meet applicable setback standards and require a building permit and zoning certification.

**Do I need a permit for a water heater and does it require an inspection?**
Yes. Whether you are installing a new type of water heater or replacing an existing one, it is required that you get a permit prior to the installation and follow through with an inspection.