



Home Occupations & Cottage Industries

Bulletin 25

Division of Building, Safety, and Inspection for 2015 International Codes

Terms

PCC - Pierce County Code

IBC - International Building Code

BPRS - Residential Building Permit

WAC - Washington Administrative Code

IRC - International Residential Code

General Standards for Home Occupation and Cottage Industry

The following highlights the requirements for home occupations and cottage industries. Both of these terms refer to the operation of a business in the home by the person(s) living there.

1. PCC 18A.37.110 1. - General Standards

These general standards apply to all home occupation and cottage industries:

- a. The activity shall not create noticeable glare, noise, odor, vibration, smoke, dust, heat, or cause interference with radio or television receivers at or beyond the property lines;
- b. Activities shall be performed completely inside the residence, an accessory structure, or a combination of the two;
- c. Structures used for a cottage industry shall comply with building and fire code requirements for permits, occupancy, and inspection;
- d. The activity shall be clearly incidental and secondary to the residential use of the property and shall not change the residential character of the dwelling or neighborhood;
- e. Manufacturing shall be limited to the small-scale assembly of already manufactured parts but does not preclude production of small, individually handcrafted items, furniture, or other wood items;
- f. Customers and clients are allowed between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. and sales in connection with the home occupation are limited to merchandise handcrafted on site or items accessory to a service (i.e., hair care products for beauty salon);
- g. Signage is regulated by Title 18B PCC, Signs;
- h. Off-street parking shall include one space per non-resident employee and one for each related vehicle (unless the employee drives the cottage industry vehicle only) in addition to the parking required for the single-family residence according to PCC 18A.35.040, Parking;
- i. Use of hazardous materials or equipment must comply with the requirements of the Uniform Building Code and the Uniform Fire Code.

Home Occupations

1. PCC 18.25.030 - Definitions

"Home Occupation" means any business activity carried on within the principal residence or within a permitted accessory building, which does not have to meet fire and building code regulations for business or industrial occupancy.

2. PCC 18A.36.110 2.

Home Occupations may be allowed in urban and rural zones without a permit when all of the following apply:

- a. The home occupation shall be limited to an area not more than 500 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less;
- b. Only the resident can perform the home occupation (non-resident employees are prohibited);
- c. One vehicle up to 18,000 gross vehicle weight is allowed; and
- d. There shall be no outside display or storage of materials, merchandise, or equipment.

Cottage Industry

1. PCC 18.25.030 - Definitions

"Cottage Industries" means any business activity carried on within the principal residence or within a permitted accessory structure which does have to meet fire and building code regulations for business or industrial occupancy.

2. PCC 18A.36.110 3. Cottage Industry Level I.

Cottage Industry Level I may be allowed in urban and rural zones with approval of an Administrative Use Permit (AUP) and compliance with the following standards:

- a. The cottage industry shall be limited to 1,000 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less;
- b. Two non-resident employees are permitted;
- c. Two 18,000 gross vehicle weight vehicles are allowed; and
- d. A Level 3 landscaping buffer shall be provided between cottage industry activities and neighboring residential dwellings. See PCC 18J.15.040 for landscape buffer standards.

3. PCC 18A.36.110 4. - Cottage Industry Level II.

Cottage Industry Level II may be allowed in rural zones only upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and compliance with the following standards:

- a. The cottage industry shall be limited to 1,500 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less. Properties which are five acres or greater may exceed this requirement at the Examiner's discretion;
- b. Four non-resident employees are allowed;
- c. Three 18,000 gross vehicle weight vehicles and one vehicle in excess of 18,000 gross vehicle weight are allowed;
- d. Activities and outside storage of materials and equipment are allowed provided the site is sufficiently screened;
- e. Activities involving outdoor events, such as wedding facilities, shall be limited to six outdoor events per year, with no more than one event per month; properties which are greater than 10 acres in size may exceed this standard at the Hearing Examiner's discretion;
- f. Outside material and vehicle storage shall be screened from neighboring residential dwellings with a Level 3 landscape buffer and F1 fencing. See PCC 18J.15.040 for landscape and fence buffer standards; and
- g. A Level 3 landscape buffer shall be provided between cottage industry activities and neighboring residential dwellings. See PCC 18J.15.040 for landscape buffer standards.

Building Permit Requirements

A building permit is required for many Home Occupations and Cottage Industries established after January 1, 2005.

The type of permit for a cottage industry use in existing and/or new structure(s) shall be a residential building permit (BPRS). The International Building Code (IBC) will be used for the code requirements.

With the adoption of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) a Certificate of Occupancy is now required for homes and businesses. The IBC also requires a fire separation between a house and a business.

There are a couple of exceptions to the separation requirements. In order to review for compliance with the requirements or the exceptions a permit will be required. A certificate of occupancy will be issued to document the review and approval of the home occupation and or cottage industry.

IBC/WAC 51-51, Section R202 State Amendment Definition – Dwelling Unit

2. Offices, mercantile, personal care salons or similar uses conducted primarily by the occupants of a dwelling unit, and are secondary to the use of the unit for dwelling purposes, and which do not exceed 500 square feet (46.4m²).

This definition allows the businesses listed in a dwelling unit without a building permit.

Here are five situations and the required building permits for each one.

1. **Home occupations** that have no associated construction activity and are offices, mercantile, personal care salons or similar uses **do not need a building permit.**
2. **Home occupations** that have associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above need **building, plumbing, mechanical, and/or electrical permits** for the work being done.
3. **Home occupations** which are **not** one of the uses listed in the definition above will require an occupancy separation. Any use that will require an occupancy separation wall **must have a permit** to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation shall be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.
4. **Cottage Industry Levels I & II** that are not over 500 square feet and have no associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above **do not need a building permit.**
5. **Cottage Industry Levels I & II** that are over 500 square feet or are not one of the uses listed above, **need building permits.** Permits are required to construct an occupancy separation. Any use that will require an occupancy separation **must have a permit** to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation shall be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.

Pre-Application Reviews. Pre-application reviews are strongly encouraged. Call 253-798-3741 for information or an appointment. This is an opportunity for applicants to ask questions and review the scope and cost of permitting requirements.

Inquiries. Persons seeking information on the different uses allowed between the three types of in-home businesses should call the Permit Information Line at (253) 798-3739.