

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS SURVEY DOCUMENTATION

## COUNTY ASCII Files

### County Level Residential Building Permit Statistics

#### Introduction

This file provides building permit statistics on new privately-owned residential construction. These are the County totals for all counties in which every permit office is requested to report monthly and the annual file shows all counties.

#### File Format

- A. File Names: Two files are provided for the monthly data series and one for annual series ("YYMM" is the survey date for monthly using the 2-digit year and 2-digit month, "YYYY" is the survey year for annual using the 4-digit year):
1. Current month - data tabulated for only that survey period.  
  
2000 forward: CO<YYMM>C.TXT, i.e. CO0001C.TXT
  2. Year-to-Date - summed data from the beginning of the year through the current survey month including late reports and corrections for prior months.  
  
2000 Forward: CO<YYMM>Y.TXT, i.e. CO0001Y.TXT
  3. Annual - data tabulated for that survey year:  
  
1991 Forward: CO<YYYY>A, i.e. CO1991A.TXT
- B. Each file is an ASCII, comma delimited file, providing:
1. Survey date, in the form "YYYYMM" (annual files show a date of "YYYY").
  2. Two-digit FIPS state code.
  3. Three-digit County code.
  4. One-digit Census region code:  
  

1	Northeast
2	Midwest

- 3 South
- 4 West

5. One-digit Census division code:

- 1 New England
- 2 Middle Atlantic
- 3 East North Central
- 4 West North Central
- 5 South Atlantic
- 6 East South Central
- 7 West South Central
- 8 Mountain
- 9 Pacific

6. Alpha County name.

7. Buildings, Units and Valuation Permit Data

C. Two sets of data are shown for each type of construction:

- 1. Estimates with Imputation - includes reported data for monthly respondents and imputed data for nonrespondents.
- 2. Reported Only - includes only reported data for respondents.

Source of Data

Statistics on construction authorized by building permits are based upon reports submitted by local building permit officials in response to a mail survey. They are obtained using Form C-404, "Report of Building or Zoning Permits Issued and Local Public Construction." When a report is not received, missing residential data are either (1) obtained from the Survey of Use of Permits (SUP) or (2) imputed. All other missing data are imputed. The SUP is used to collect information on housing starts. Data from the SUP are available only for about 850 places for which Census Bureau interviewers list and sample the permits that authorized construction of new residential structures. For places not in the SUP, imputations are used. The imputations are based on the assumption that the ratio of current month authorizations to those of a year ago should be the same for both respondents and nonrespondents. When imputing annual statistics, the ratio is based on current year authorizations to those of a year ago.

Monthly and Annual Building Permits Statistics

Monthly statistics are obtained by directly cumulating the data for all places in the county that are requested to report monthly. Annual statistics are obtained by cumulating data for all places in the county, both monthly and annual reporters.

### Reliability of the Data

Although these statistics are not subject to sampling variability, they are subject to various response and operational errors which can be attributed to many sources: inability to obtain information about all cases, differences in interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness by respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in processing the data. Explicit measures of the effects of these errors are not available. However, most of the important operational errors were detected and corrected in the course of the bureau's review of the data for reasonableness and consistency.

### Geographic Coverage of Building Permit Jurisdiction

Most of the permit-issuing jurisdictions are municipalities; the remainder are counties, townships, or unincorporated towns. For the municipalities, and townships or towns, the area subject to building permit requirements to which the figures pertain is normally that of the governmental jurisdictions. A small number of municipalities have authority to issue building or zoning permits for areas extending beyond their corporate limits. In such cases, the data relate to the entire area within which the permit-issuing authority is exercised. Similarly, a small number of townships issue permits for only a part of the township and the data normally covers only the area subject to the township's permit system.

### Limitations of Data

The portion of construction measurable from building permit records is inherently limited since such records obviously do not reflect construction activity outside of areas subject to local permit requirements. For the nation as a whole, less than 5 percent of all privately owned housing units built are constructed in areas that do not require building permits.

The reported statistics are also influenced by the following factors:

1. Some building permit jurisdictions close their books a few days before the end of the month/year, so that the time reference for permits is not, in all cases, strictly the calendar month/year.
2. A study spanning 4 years showed that about 3 percent of the single-family houses built in permit-issuing places are built without a permit.

To the extent that most of these limiting factors apply rather consistently over an extended period, they may not seriously impair the usefulness of building permit statistics as prompt indicators of trends in residential construction activity.

Questions should be directed to Economic Indicators Division, U.S. Census Bureau,  
Washington, D.C. 20233. Phone: (301) 763-5160.

## Record Layout of Building Permits County ASCII Customer Data File

<u>Field</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Section</u>
1	Survey Date; YYYYMM. "YYYY" is the 4-digit year and "MM" is the month (annual is YYYY), i.e. January 2000 = 200001, Annual 1999 = 1999.	
2	FIPS State code	Identification
3	FIPS County Code	
4	Census region code (1-4)	
5	Census division code (1-9)	
6	Alpha Geographic (County) Name	
<hr/>		
7	101-Buildings	
8	101-Units	
9	101-Valuation	
10	103-Buildings	
11	103-Units	Estimates
12	103-Valuation	With
13	104-Buildings	Imputation
14	104-Units	
15	104-Valuation	
16	105-Buildings	
17	105-Units	
18	105-Valuation	
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19	101-Buildings	
20	101-Units	
21	101-Valuation	
22	103-Buildings	
23	103-Units	
24	103-Valuation	Reported
25	104-Buildings	Only
26	104-Units	
27	104-Valuation	
28	105-Buildings	
29	105-Units	
30	105-Valuation	