

# PERMITTING PROCESS REALITIES: HOW TO AVOID PROJECT-DERAILING MISCONCEPTIONS

You have a new construction project to complete. You've found the ideal engineering firm to design it, a contractor to build it and the project is ready to move forward.

You can now head to the permitting office, write a big, fat check and purchase your construction permit. Right?

Not quite.

People often think the permitting process is more straightforward than it actually is. Below, we've highlighted some common misconceptions about the process and what you should know going into a new project.

***Misconception #1: Getting a permit (construction, building, environmental, etc.) is an easy transaction – like buying something from a store.***

***Reality:*** Permitting is, first and foremost, a process. Just like you must pour your building's foundation before you can start putting up walls, you must also lay groundwork for your permits.

Knowing the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) (which can comprise several entities), what its requirements are and the processes it employs can help you set realistic schedules and expectations.

Being proactive about learning your project-specific process is the best approach when it comes to permitting.

***Misconception #2: We did the same thing at another facility and it got approved, so we don't need to change anything for this new location.***

***Reality:*** Different parts of the country (or even neighboring communities) can have vastly different requirements for permitting.

Determining and understanding regional differences is crucial to your project. While you should use lessons learned from previous projects, new work should be freshly evaluated for local zoning and code issues.

***Misconception #3: We can figure out the permitting piece when we're ready for construction.***

***Reality:*** Incorporating permitting review and approvals into the design process can help prevent some very costly mistakes. These errors can include overlooking or not properly accounting for federal, local or AHJ codes, restrictions and amendments.

As an example, as you go through the construction permit process, you may find out you need an environmental permit that could take up to a year to be approved.

To address this issue, don't avoid the AHJ! Set up a preapplication meeting to review AHJ processes and requirements so they can be incorporated into the construction documents and project schedule.

***Misconception #4: We submitted for our permit, so construction can commence.***



## **BEST PERMITTING PROCESS PRACTICES**

- > *Start early. Permitting is a process, not a transaction.*
- > *Integrate permitting processes into your project schedule and workflow to avoid surprises.*
- > *Be proactive. Knowing what permits you'll need and how the process works can save you time and money.*

***Reality:*** Until you've pulled your permits, construction is unable to begin. If you haven't proactively researched and incorporated AHJ requirements into your construction documents, the permitting process can be extended significantly.

Delays in securing your project permit can significantly impact your finances as well as your construction and operation schedules. Your contractor may not be able to retain its subcontractors if your permit is delayed, leading to subcontractor remobilization, higher costs and extended schedules.

## PERMITTING PROCESS REALITIES

As a result, you will pay more for your project and suffer lost revenue from a late startup.

**Misconception #5: Once we have a permit, we can make changes at will.**

**Reality:** Changes to the project must be resubmitted to and reapproved by the AHJ.

This resubmittal and approval process is critical when it comes to AHJ construction inspections.

When inspectors visit a project site, they'll only inspect the work that's been performed against the AHJ-approved permit documents. If a discrepancy is found between the construction and permit documents, work on your project may be shut down. This project delay will last until the permit

documents are updated, submitted and reapproved.

Proper planning prior to permit submittal will minimize your project changes and review time.



Not being prepared for the complexities of the permitting process could impact your project schedule and construction costs, and result in lost operational revenue.

**Misconception #6: The permitting process is confusing and overwhelming.**

**Reality:** While it can be complicated, a trusted architecture and engineering partner can help guide you through even the most tangled of permitting red tape. They know the process and are adept at navigating the AHJ workflow.

By utilizing the strategies above, your project will move through the permitting process more efficiently (and with fewer comments during AHJ reviews). This leads to obtaining your permits faster, your contractor moving forward sooner and your facility coming online quicker, thereby increasing your speed to market.



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