



Technical Services Division

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Storage Sheds Exempt from requiring a Building Permit:

What is the definition of a storage shed exempt from requiring a building permit?

The San Francisco Building Code defines a storage shed exempt from permit as follows: "A one-story detached accessory building or structure used as a tool and storage shed, children's playhouse or similar uses, provided the projected roof area does not exceed 100 square feet". (SFBC 106A.2.1.)

What is the maximum height of the storage shed exempt from permit?

The maximum allowable height for a storage shed exempt from permit is 1 story and not more than 8 feet measured from the grade of the yard to the top of the roof of the structure. (SFBC 106A.2, SF Planning Code Section 136(a)).

How many storage sheds exempt from permit are allowed per lot or yard?

Only one storage shed exempt from permit is allowed per lot or yard. A building permit with Planning Department approval would be required to approve more than one storage shed per lot or yard.

What if a storage shed is more than 100 SF in area or more than 8 feet high?

A storage shed exceeding the maximum projected roof area (100 SF) or maximum height (8 feet) requires a building permit with plans and the approval of the Planning Department regarding setbacks and the location in the yard.

Can the storage shed be used for other purposes besides storage or as a children's playhouse?

No, the exemption from permit is limited to a non-habitable shed used for general storage, the storage of garden tools and equipment, or as a children's playhouse. A building permit is required for other uses.

Do accessory buildings used as habitable space require a building permit?

Yes, accessory buildings used as a habitable space such as a home office, workshop, study room, extra bedroom, art studio, exercise room, dressing room, meditation room, bathroom, etc. requires a building permit with Planning Department approval and must also meet all applicable building code requirements.

Can the storage shed exempt from permit be attached to the house, garage or other buildings on the lot?

No, the storage shed exempt from permit must not be attached or connected to the house, garage or other buildings on the lot.

Can a storage shed exempt from permit be installed on a deck above the grade of the yard?

No, a building permit is required to install a storage shed on a deck above the grade of the yard.



Technical Services Division

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Storage Sheds Exempt from Permit: continued, Page 2.

Can a storage shed exempt from permit be installed on a roof deck?

No, a building permit is required to install a storage shed on a roof deck.

What materials can be used to construct a storage unit that is exempt from permit?

Although the storage shed may be exempt from permit, the SFBC states that storage shed construction shall meet minimum code requirements per SFBC 106A.2: “Exemptions from the permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of this code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.”

What are the minimum setback requirements for a storage shed exempt from permit?

As noted previously, a storage shed exempt from permit is required to meet building and planning code requirements including minimum side and rear yard setback requirements. Please confirm rear yard setback requirements with the Planning Department.

Do yard or garden structures such as a pergola, cabana or sunshade require a building permit?

Yes, if a pergola, cabana, or sunshade structure is more than 60 SF in area, more than 8 feet high, or is more than 50% enclosed, a building permit is required for Building and Planning Department approval.

Can lights or electrical receptacles be installed in a storage shed that is exempt from permit?

Yes, if an electrical permit is obtained and the work is inspected and approved.

If you have other questions regarding storage sheds that are exempt from permit please contact the Technical Services by email at: techq@sfgov.org or by phone at: 628-652-3720.

Code References:

2022 San Francisco Building Code 106A.2 Work exempt from permit:

1. One-story detached accessory buildings or structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided the projected roof area does not exceed 100 square feet.

2022 San Francisco Planning Code Section 136(a):

Other structures commonly used in gardening activities, such as greenhouses and sheds for storage of garden tools, if no more than eight feet in height above grade and covering no more than 100 square feet of land. Garden structures enclosed by walls on no more than 50 percent of their perimeter, such as gazebos and sunshades, if no more than eight feet in height above grade and covering no more than 60 square feet of land.

(Updated May 11, 2023)