



Department of Land Use

FAQ

Sheds and Detached Garages

- Q. What size of shed can I build without getting a permit?
- A. You can build a shed up to 200 square feet without a permit, but all setback requirements must still be followed.
- Q. Do I need a permit if my shed is “temporary” and “built on treated 4x4 skids”?
- A. Unless you plan on moving your shed at regular intervals, the County considers your building to be permanent. If you did actually plan on moving the building off the site in less than a year, you would need to follow special regulations for temporary structures.
- Q. How far does my shed/garage have to be from my property line?
- A. The New Castle County Unified Development Code (UDC) requires that sheds and garages be a minimum of three (3) feet from rear and side property lines.
- Q. Are there any other restrictions of which I need to be aware?
- A. There are two other provisions of the Code that affect where you place your detached accessory building. First, the structure may not be located in front of the house itself. (There is an exception for lots over two acres that allows one accessory structure in front of the house as long as it is not in the required front or street yards.) Secondly, the accessory structure can only occupy 30% of the required rear yard. The required rear yard is determined by your zoning district and is usually 25 to 40 feet measured from the rear property line. For example, if your lot is 100' wide and your required rear yard is 25', then you could have a structure occupying 750 square feet of the required rear yard. (100' x 25' x 30% = 750 sq. ft.) If your structure is larger than 750 square feet, you would need to move it forward so that only 750 square feet of the building occupies the required rear yard. Finally, you need to check your deed for any deed restrictions that may affect your proposed structure, as New Castle County does not review for or enforce private deed restrictions.
- Q. What do I need to submit to obtain a permit?

A. For sheds or garages of 480 square feet or less, you will need three copies of a plot plan of your property. This can be your mortgage inspection survey or any other legal survey that shows property boundaries and existing structures. For structures over 480 square feet, you will need to have a surveyor prepare a *lines and grades* survey. This is a topographical survey that shows the existing and proposed contours of your lot along with the proposed structure. You will need to submit three copies of the lines and grades survey. Along with the surveys, you will need to submit three copies of the construction plans of your proposed structure. These plans should be drawn to scale and consist of elevations (front view, side view, etc.), floor plans and cross sections.

Q. What if I buy a pre-built shed, do I still need plans, or is the brochure the shed dealer gave me enough?

A. Even if the shed is delivered to your property completely finished, it still has to conform to County Building Codes. To verify that the shed meets our codes we need to see construction plans, therefore, you must present plans to obtain the permit. Some shed dealers are unable to provide plans. In that case you will either have to find a dealer that will give you plans or draw the plans yourself, based on your observation of the building and specifications from the dealer.

Q. Do I need to put a concrete foundation under my shed?

A. Some sheds are designed to sit directly on the ground on a series of treated 4x4 "skids." This type of a building still needs to be anchored to the ground to prevent movement during high winds. Mobile home style anchors, which auger into the ground, can be used for anchorage, placing them at 6' intervals around the perimeter of the structure. It is recommended that you first place a gravel bed, for better drainage, beneath the shed if you are not putting it on a concrete foundation.

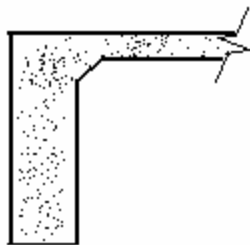
Q. What's the difference between a shed and a detached garage?

A. A garage is defined as a structure for the repair or storage of a motorized vehicle. If the structure you are building is large enough to accommodate a car, and has a door large enough to permit entrance of a vehicle, it will be considered a garage even if you do not plan to use it as such.

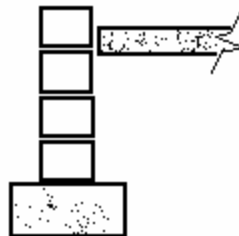
Q. What type of foundation do I need for a garage?

A. There are two basic types of foundations: the monolithic pour and the standard footer and block foundation. A monolithic pour is a combined footer and slab poured all at once. A footer and block foundation is one where a concrete footing is poured, blocks are then laid and, finally, the concrete slab is poured. The advantage of the monolithic pour is that it is all done in one step without the need for backfilling and waiting for the concrete and mortar to set. Regardless of which type of foundation you choose, the bottom of the footing must be at least 32" below grade. The footing should be a minimum of 12" wide for the monolithic pour and a minimum of 16" wide for the block foundation.

There is a third type of construction that can be employed for garages, the "pole building." This type of structure uses a series of vertical "poles" (usually 6x6's) connected by horizontal members called "girts" and with a header across the top supporting roof trusses. A light metal siding fastened to the girts covers the building. This is an economical method of construction frequently used for agricultural buildings.



Monolithic pour foundation



Standard footing/block foundation

Q. How high can I make my shed or garage?

A. If the structure, or any part of the structure, is located in the required rear yard, the maximum height allowed is 20' measured to the highest part of the roof. If the structure is located completely out of all setbacks, the building height is only limited by the height allowed for the principal structure in your zoning district (usually 35').

The FAQ series only summarizes or highlights portions of the New Castle County Unified Development Code (UDC). In all applications, the UDC must be directly consulted. The language in the UDC prevails over the FAQ.

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