

business owner's guide to on-premise signs

Needs
A Permit

Does
NOT
Need A
Permit



THE FOLLOWING SIGNS REQUIRE A PERMIT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES:

- **A** Electrical/neon Sign
- **B** Storefront Sign
- **C** Awning Sign
- **D** Hanging Sign
- **E** Painted, Decal or Vinyl-Cling Sign
(If more than 25% of Window)

- **1** Painted-on, decal or vinyl-cling sign (single or multiple) that covers 25% or LESS of each window
- **2** Incidental signs stating address, hours of operation or open/close UNLESS the sign also contains a business name, slogan or logo*

*Please contact Zoning at 312-744-5777 for information on incidental sign standards.



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frequently asked questions

What is the process to get a permit?

First, complete the online and supplemental hard copy application. Submit both applications to the Department of Buildings (DOB), City Hall, Room 900. DOB will log in your application and route it to Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) and, once approved, it will be routed to Zoning for review and approval. After approvals from BACP and Zoning, DOB conducts a review, issues any corrections, and ultimately issues the permit.

Do I need to hire a contractor?

You do not need to hire a contractor if there is no electrical or structural work and the sign is not in the public way.

What if my contractor tells me I don't need a permit?

Please be aware that the property owner is ultimately responsible if the sign is non-compliant.

How much signage can I display?

A business is allowed a minimum of 32 square feet. Anything beyond this allowance is subject to zoning regulations based on location. Please contact the Zoning Bureau of the Department of Planning and Development at 312-744-5777 for more information.

What if my sign extends over the public way?

A City Council ordinance and a Public Way Use permit from the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection are required if any portion of your sign, sign structure or sign apparatus (such as external floodlights illuminating the sign) extends over the public way (sidewalk, street or alley). For more information, please contact the Alderman's office where your business is located, or Business Affairs and Consumer Protection at 312-74-GOBIZ.

What if I have a large sign?

A City Council order is required for any sign over 100 square feet in area or placed over 24 feet above ground level. For information on requesting a City Council Order, please contact the Alderman's office where your business is located.

NOTE: An Ordinance and an Order are two separate requirements and obtaining one does not satisfy the other.

What does a sign permit cost?

Zoning review fee for an on premise sign: \$200.00.
Building department review fees: (in addition to above fee)

- 0-49 sq.ft. sign: \$50.00
- 50-99 sq.ft. sign: \$100.00
- 100-199 sq.ft. sign: \$200.00
- 200-499 sq.ft sign: \$500.00
- over 500 sq. ft. sign: \$1000.00

An inspection of \$40 for the first 100 square feet, plus \$1 for every square foot over 100 square feet is assessed every two years (i.e. \$40 for a 100-square-foot sign and \$45 for a 105-square-foot sign).

Can I install a sign before the permit is issued?

No, this violates the Code meant for the protection of the public and for the protection of the business owner. The sign size may not be allowed under the building, zoning or public way provisions of the Code. The City does not want business owners to invest money on signs that may need to be removed.

What do I do if I receive a violation?

You would receive a notice to appear at an Administrative Hearing. Pursuant to Illinois law, a corporation (including an LLC or an S Corp) requires representation by an attorney. For business signs, compliance is a defense at Administrative Hearings. If you receive a violation, simply obtain a sign permit, bring it to your hearing and you will avoid paying a fine.

What if I don't appear in court?

You could be in default and subject to fines.

Relevant Code Provisions

Business owners are strongly advised to consult the Code and obtain a permit PRIOR to the ordering or purchase of any sign, as not all signs are allowed under the building, zoning or public way provisions of the code.

For your convenience, please note that the majority of Code provisions relating to signs can be found online in the following chapters of the Municipal Code of Chicago:

Chapter 10-24 (*Signs Extending Over and Upon the Public Way*)

Chapter 13-20 Article XIII (*Signs and Related Structures*)

Chapter 13-96 (*Miscellaneous Structures*)

Chapter 17-12 (*Signs*)

Chapter 14E-600 (*Electrical Signs and Outline Lighting*)

All code provisions can be found at: www.amlegal.com/codes/client/chicago_il/