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E-permitting grows to include full range of services

Building contractors can submit plans, track projects, and more without leaving the office

(Salem) — Oregon has taken a significant step in making building department services easier to access and more consistent across the state.

The city of Springfield became the first building department to implement the state's full-service e-permitting program, which means contractors there can submit plans, track projects, and buy all kinds of permits online. The Department of Consumer and Business Services Building Codes Division is working with 16 other jurisdictions, including Lane County, Portland, and Lake Oswego, on implementing the full-service program. The program has the capacity to serve all 132 local building departments in Oregon.

“Making building department services available online saves time for contractors, speeds the construction process, and makes it easier to do business in Oregon,” said Patrick Allen, acting administrator of the Building Codes Division.

E-permitting began in 2005 as part of Governor Kulongoski's regulatory streamlining effort. Since then, 34 jurisdictions have signed on to the “basic services” program, which allows contractors to buy simple, non-plan review permits online. To date, more than 78,000 permit applications have been processed online through BuildingPermits.Oregon.gov.

With full-service e-permitting, licensed contractors can access many more services, including:

- Purchasing a full range of permits including permits for the construction of new buildings
- Submitting electronic plans for review
- Receiving correction notices
- Printing their permit
- Tracking the permit progress
- Receiving their Certificate of Occupancy

In addition, licensed architects and engineers can submit applications, including documents for new buildings.

For example, Rene Fabricant of Springfield-based Branch Engineering recently was able to submit a set of plans for new storage buildings in Springfield through the e-permitting website.

“I am looking forward to the efficiencies that electronic submittals will allow, including the direct savings that will occur because we will not need to submit paper copies,” Fabricant said. “This is a saving for me as an engineer as well as a saving for our clients.”

E-permitting not only saves time for contractors, it reduces the building department's workload because applications filled out online are immediately deposited into the department's system.

“Although we feel we have provided outstanding permit and inspection services in the past, the City of Springfield is extremely excited about the heightened level of industry services and increased public access that can be provided to our customers in the future with the full-service e-permitting system,” said City of Springfield Building Official Dave Puent.

The e-permitting system was developed using software from Accela, Inc., which facilitates shared services approaches for state and local governments.

“In most states, securing permits online requires navigating a maze of websites with different formats for applications and payments, and finally awaiting confirmation that inspections have been scheduled and permits granted,” said Maury Blackman, Accela's CEO and President. “We applaud Oregon's vision and commitment to provide streamlined, accessible government services that will make life easier for building-industry professionals.”

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The Building Codes Division, part of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, provides building code development, administration, inspection, plan review, licensing, and permit services to the construction industry to help ensure the safe and effective construction of structures in Oregon. For more information, visit www.bcd.oregon.gov.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.