

FINISHED BASEMENTS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO APPLY FOR A PERMIT



Converting an unfinished basement into additional living space in a home is a very popular home improvement project. This information packet has been designed to assist homeowners to prepare their permit application when they are designing a finished basement project themselves for their own private residence. The topics covered will include the following:

1. The application itself.
2. Building elements such as framing, fireblocking, and insulation.
3. Electrical requirements.
4. Plumbing requirements.
5. Special requirements for bedrooms.

Whether you are planning on doing the work yourself or hiring a contractor, this information will assist you so that your application process can go smoothly and ensure that all aspects of the project have been accounted for during your planning phase.

PERMIT APPLICATION

Getting Started



By now you should have received your permit application jacket along with several forms. These forms are provided and governed by the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code, otherwise known as the UCC or Administrative Code. This code is regulated by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and is the law that governs the permitting process throughout the state. If there are any plan review comments from the Construction Department that pertain to the Administrative Code, they will be noted on all correspondence as NJAC 5:23.

The first form is the Construction Permit Application (Form F100-1) which is the manila folder that contains the other forms. Make sure that boxes 1 and 2 are filled out as completely as possible. If you are designing the project yourself, and/or you plan on doing all of the work yourself, then simply put "self" as principle contractor and/or architect or engineer. Next, inside the folder you will find "Certification in Lieu of Oath." This page must be signed by either the homeowner, if the homeowner is the designer, or the agent, if the design is made by an architect or engineer. **Home improvement contractors are not authorized to design your project for you.**

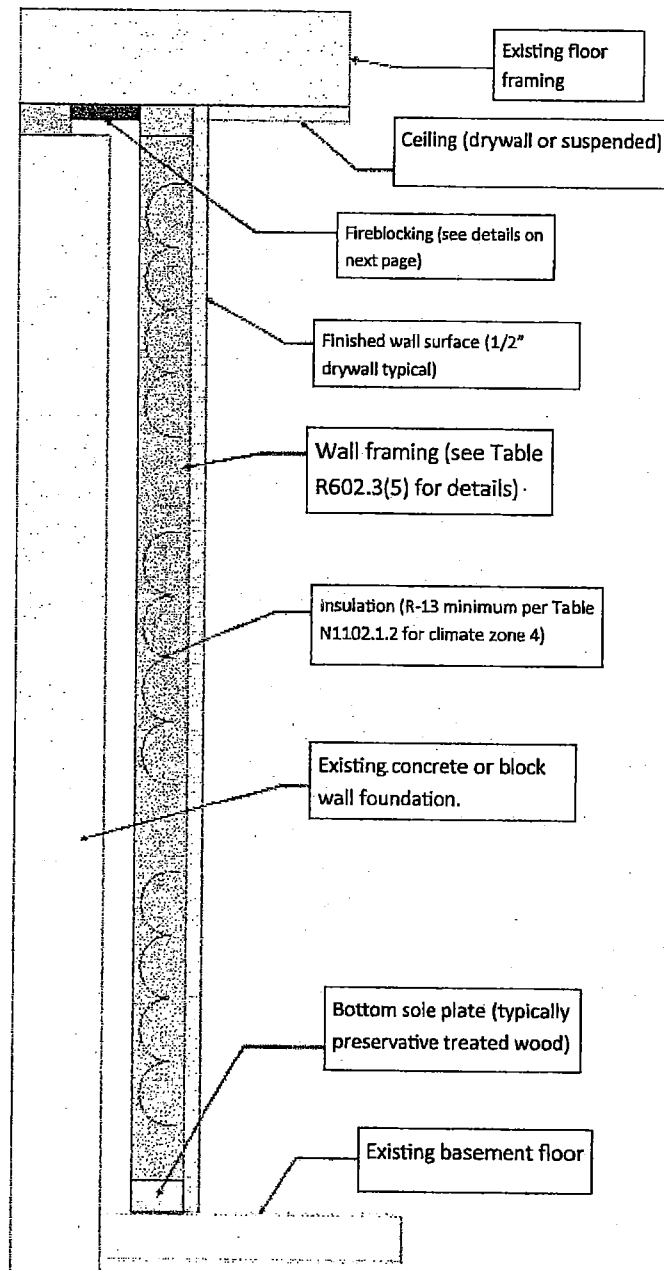
A finished basement requires approval from the Zoning Department, so you will find a Zoning Application form in your packet. Make sure this form is filled out as completely as possible. Any questions about this form should be addressed to the Zoning department.

The rest of the forms in your packet will be discussed as we cover the information you need to provide for each of the Subcode disciplines: Building, Electrical, Plumbing, and Fire Protection.

BUILDING

SECTION DRAWING

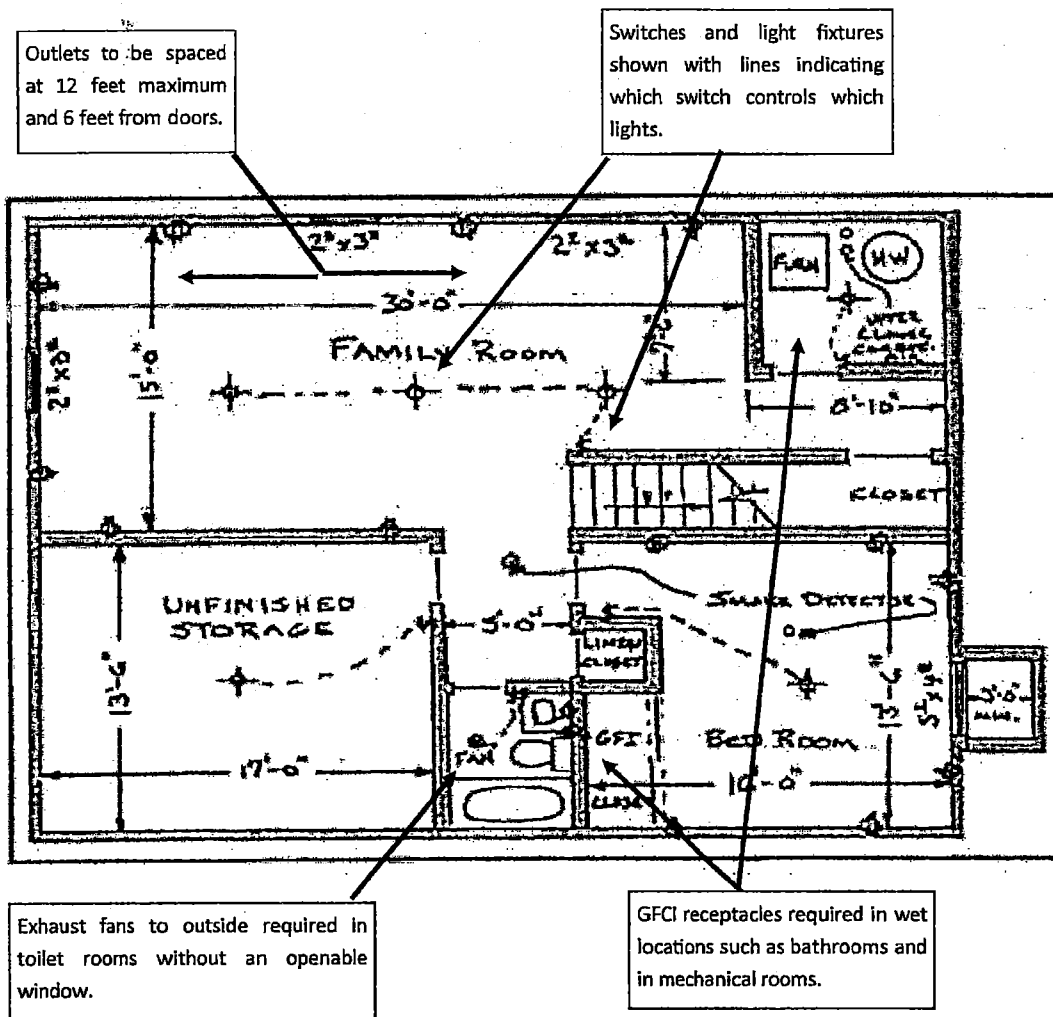
The section drawing shows a side view of a wall as if you were looking at a slice of the wall. This drawing shows important details pertaining to the construction of the wall including materials, insulation, and fireblocking. See the example below.



ELECTRICAL

WARNING: Due to the inherent risks involved with working with electricity, depending on your comfort level and experience, we would highly recommend that you hire a professional, NJ licensed, electrical contractor to help design and install the electrical components in your basement project. A licensed electrical contractor can fill out the electrical permit form for you and place their raised seal on your design or on a design that they draw up based on your input. If, however, you feel that you are experienced and knowledgeable enough to do your own electrical work, you are allowed to do so provided that you are doing the work in your own primary residence. Just bear in mind that it is not the duty of the electrical inspector to train or instruct you as to the proper way to complete your project, and you are assuming all responsibility and liability should your project have any mishaps.

The locations of outlet receptacles, switches, and permanent light fixtures should be identified on your plan drawing, as in the example below.

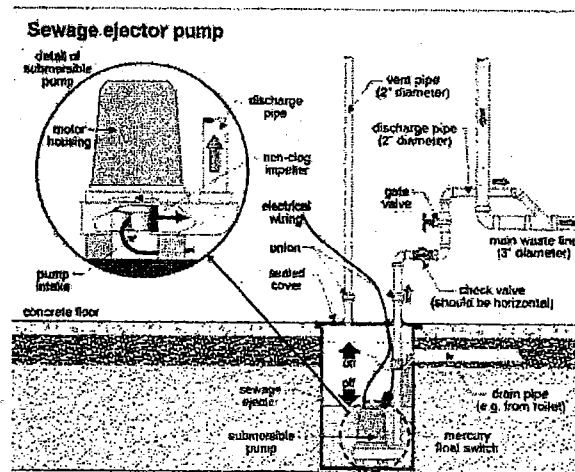


PLUMBING

WARNING: Very similar to electrical, depending on your comfort level and experience, we would highly recommend that you hire a professional, NJ licensed, plumbing contractor to help design and install the plumbing components in your basement project. A licensed plumbing contractor can fill out the plumbing permit form for you and place their raised seal on your design or on a design that they draw up based on your input. If, however, you feel that you are experienced and knowledgeable enough to do your own plumbing work, you are allowed to do so provided that you are doing the work in your own primary residence. Just bear in mind, that it is not the duty of the plumbing inspector to train or instruct you as to the proper way to complete your project, and you are assuming all responsibility and liability should your project have any mishaps.

Sewage Ejector Pump

Including plumbing fixtures in your project is a very popular option for many finished basements. Adding bathrooms, powder rooms, laundry rooms, wet bars, etc., can add not only additional function to your space, but also added value to your home. In many cases, however, the main sewer drain in your home will be located above your basement floor, which will require the installation of a sewer ejection pump. Installation of this device should be included in both your plumbing and electrical permit applications.



FILLING OUT YOUR APPLICATION

When filling out your Plumbing Subcode Technical Section form (UCC F130), there are some key details that must be included.

1. If using a professional contractor, make sure that the contractor's license number, registration number, Federal Employment ID number, and raised professional seal are included in Section A. If not using a contractor, put "self" as the contractor.
2. In Section B, place the size of the existing sewer and water service and include the estimated cost of just the plumbing portion of the project. Also please indicate whether your water and sewer is private or public.
3. Make sure you or your contractor signs Section C.
4. In the box in Section D, simply write "Finished Basement." Count up all of the plumbing elements on your plan and place those numbers on the quantity table.
5. You will also need to include with your application a diagram of your water distribution system and sewer system with pipe sizes and materials. See the following page for examples. If your plumber prepares these diagrams for you, make sure they place their raised seal on the diagram.

FIRE PROTECTION

Typically, a Fire Protection permit application is not required for most finished basement projects. However, if you intend to create an additional bedroom in your basement, you will need a Fire Protection application for additional smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Plus; there are other important considerations to be made to assure the safety of the person or persons using the basement as sleeping quarters in the event of a house fire.

Every room in a basement being used as a bedroom must have a way to escape directly to the outdoors in the event of a fire. Most residential homes are not designed to have bedrooms in the basement, and if the only way to escape the house is by using the interior stairs, people could become easily trapped, creating a significant risk to their lives.

The solution is to install an emergency escape window well or stair well into the foundation of the home so that escape and/or rescue is possible. Section R310 in the IRC goes into great detail as to what the minimum standards are for the installation of such an element. Of course, cutting a large opening in your foundation will have major implications on your house's structure, so it would be highly advisable to consult a NJ licensed structural engineer for a design.

R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue opening required. Every sleeping room shall have not less than one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, an emergency escape and rescue opening shall be required in each sleeping room. Emergency escape and rescue openings shall open directly into a public way, or to a yard or court that opens to a public way.

