



# Home Occupations & Cottage Industries Bulletin # 25

Department of Planning and Land Services, June 2007  
Division of Building Safety and Inspection for 2006 I Codes

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This bulletin is prepared to provide highlights on the requirements for home occupations or cottage industries. Both of these terms refer to the operation of a business in the home by the person(s) living there.

## **Terms**

**PCC** - Pierce County Code.  
**WAC** - Washington Administrative Code  
**IBC** - International Building Code  
**IRC** - International Residential Code

## **Home Occupation.**

**PCC 18A.35.060 “ Home occupation”** means any business activity carried on within the principal residence or within a permitted accessory structure which does not have to meet fire and building code regulations for business or industrial occupancy.

**Home Occupation.** Activities which comply with the following standards are permitted outright in either urban or rural areas:

1. Only the resident can perform the activity; non-resident employees are prohibited;
2. The activity shall be limited to an area less than 500 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less;
3. One vehicle, up to 10,000 gross vehicle weight, is permitted in connection with the activity;
4. The activity shall be performed completely inside the residence, an accessory structure, or a combination of the two;
5. There shall be no outside display or storage of materials, merchandise, or equipment.

**PCC 18A.35.060 - 1.2.2 Cottage Industry.** “Cottage Industry” means any business activity carried on within the principal residence or within a permitted accessory structure which does have to meet fire and building code regulations for business or industrial occupancy.

**Cottage Industry I.**

Activities which comply with the following standards are permitted upon issuance of an Administrative Use Permit in the urban and rural areas:

1. Two non-resident employees are permitted;
2. The activity shall be limited to 1,000 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less;
3. Two vehicles, up to 10,000 gross vehicle weight each, are permitted in connection with the activity;
4. The activity shall be performed completely inside the residence, an accessory structure, or a combination of the two; and
5. There shall be no outside display or storage of materials, merchandise, or equipment.

**Cottage Industry II.**

Activities which comply with the following standards are permitted in the rural area upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit:

1. Four non-resident employees are permitted;
2. The activity shall be limited to 1,500 square feet or a size equivalent to 50 percent of total floor area of the living space within the residence, whichever is less. Properties which are five acres or greater may exceed this requirement at the Examiner’s discretion;
3. Three vehicles up to 10,000 gross vehicle weight each and one vehicle in excess of 10,000 gross vehicle weight are permitted in connection with the activity;
4. Outside display of up to 10 items of merchandise which are consistent with Section 18A.35.060 D.5.e., is permitted provided that such items are located completely on the property and do not create a nuisance or hazard to traffic or adjacent properties; and
5. Activities and outside storage of materials and/or equipment are permitted provided the site is sufficiently screened as determined by the Examiner.

## **Building Permit Requirements**

**A building permit is required for many Home Occupations and Cottage Industries established after January 1, 2005.**

With the adoption of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) a certificate of occupancy is now required for homes and businesses. The IBC also requires a fire separation between a house and a business.

There are a couple of exceptions to the separation requirements. In order to review for compliance with the requirements or the exceptions a permit will be required. A certificate of occupancy will be issued to document the review and approval of the home occupation and or cottage industry.

### **IBC/WAC 51-51, Section R202 Definition – Dwelling Unit**

2. “Offices, mercantile, food preparation establishments for off-site consumption, personal care salons or similar uses conducted primarily by the occupants of a dwelling unit, and are secondary to the use of the unit for dwelling purposes, and which do not exceed 500 square feet (46.4 m<sup>2</sup>).

This definition allows the businesses listed in a dwelling unit without a building permit. Here are five situations and the required building permits for each one.

**Home occupations** that have no associated construction activity and are offices, mercantile, food preparation establishments for off-site consumption, personal care salons or similar uses **do not need a building permit**.

**Home occupations** that have associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above, **need building, plumbing and/or mechanical permits** for the work being done.

**Home occupations** which are **not** one of the uses listed above will require an occupancy separation.

Any use that will require an occupancy separation wall **must have a permit** to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation shall be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.

**Cottage Industry I & II** that are not over 500 square feet and have no associated construction activity and are one of the uses listed above **do not need a building permit**.

**Cottage Industry I & II** that are over 500 square feet or is not one of the uses listed above, need building permits. Permits are required to construct an occupancy separation. Any use that will require an occupancy separation must have a permit to construct it. The permit for the occupancy separation shall be included in the scope of work for any other construction needed for the new use.

**Pre-Application Reviews.** Pre-application reviews are strongly encouraged. Call 253-798-3741 for information or an appointment. This is an opportunity for applicants to ask questions and review the scope and cost of permitting requirements.

**Inquiries.** Persons seeking information on the different uses allowed between the three types of in-home businesses shall be referred to the planning technical support staff. For information on specific cases they should contact current planning.