

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Development Services Department



Building Safety

Handout AG.31

Shelter Units Exempt from Building Permit Requirements of Title 23

Scope: This handout explains how shelter units may be exempted from building code review and inspection as defined in Title 23, provided they meet the requirements outlined below. All permitting for the buildings will be submitted under an Electrical Only Permit and will include the supporting documentation needed as described below.

Basis: This handout is based on AMC 23.10.104.16, added by Assembly Ordinance (AO) 2023-70(S-1) and further modified by AO 2024-53.

Exception: Facilities proposed outside of the Anchorage Building Safety Service Area ([see GIS map here](#)) are required to submit for a Land Use Only permit and are not required to submit items listed under AMC 23.10.104.16, except as follows:

1. Utilities in the Right-of-Way would still require permit (see below Title 23 – Building Code Requirements: item 9b – Additional Permitting: Units/utilities built in the Right-of-Way).
2. An approved Zoning Use is still required (see below Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements).

Completion of the project will require three steps:

1. Issuance of permit (submitting permit and meeting Title 21 and Title 23 requirements).
2. Completion of Inspections (completing the scope of work and calling for all inspections).
3. Certificate of Completion (close out permit with the permitting office)

Table of Contents

Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements.....	2
Title 23 – Building Code Requirements	3
Inspection Requirements	6
Permit Close Out Requirements	6

Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements

A permit will not be issued if the parcel selected does not allow the proposed use, in this case shelters. This is defined and controlled by AMC Title 21.

AMC Title 21 requires a proposed use to fit a use definition in the zoning code and further be allowed on the proposed parcel for its zoning district (e.g. a single-family home would not be allowed in an industrial zone). Since there is not a specific definition for “Long-term Transient Sleeping Rooms”, the two existing use definitions applicable would be:

1. **Transitional Living Facility:** “A facility providing temporary housing with services to assist homeless persons and families with special needs to prepare for and obtain permanent housing within twenty-four months. The facility provides 24-hour a day, seven days a week programmatic assistance or services for self-sufficiency skills to its tenants, and may provide services such as, but not limited to, on-site assistance in learning independent living skills (shopping, cooking, financial budgeting, preparing for job interviews, preparing resumes, and similar skills), and referral to off-site education and employment resources (GED completion, job training, computer training, employment services, and the like) to assist the tenants in becoming financially self-sustaining.”
 - a. **Permitted Zoning Districts:** Permitted *by right* in the R-3, R-3A, R-4, R-4A, B-1B, and B3 districts. Permitted by *Conditional Use Permit* in the PLI district.
2. **Homeless and Transient Shelter:** “A facility designed to provide minimum necessities of life, including overnight accommodation, on a limited, short-term basis for individuals and families during periods of dislocation or emergency pending formulation of longer-term planning. Facility elements may include providing the physical care required, including shelter, food, and necessary medical and clothing needs, directly or by referral to appropriate agency; and planning for more permanent housing and employment, including contact with community resources.”
 - a. **Permitted Zoning Districts:** Permitted by *Conditional Use Permit* in the B-3 and PLI districts.
 - b. **Use Specific Standards:**
 - i. Homeless and transient shelters shall be located more than 500 feet from other homeless and transient shelters.
 - ii. Homeless and transient shelters shall be located within on-quarter mile of a public transit route or have a plan to provide transportation to guests. Commuter routes shall not be counted as public transit routes for this standard.
 - iii. Secure storage for both personal belongings and bicycles shall be provided on-site for guests.
 - iv. In the B-3 district, homeless and transient shelter may not serve more than 150 overnight clients. A variance pursuant to section 21.03.240 is required for a site to exceed 150 overnight client restriction, and the fee for such variance application shall be waived.

When a *Conditional Use Permit* is required, the applicant will have to apply with Planning and undergo a public hearing with the Zoning Board of Examiners and Appeals before the Electrical Only Permit can be approved.

Please provide a description of the intended use and services that will be provided by the proposed facility to meet the requirements of one of the two uses above. This can be a written narrative of the proposed facility and can be submitted along with the main permit. Zoning will review to determine if it meets the definition of the zoning use and if the property is zoned for that use.

Note: The department reserves the right to require a final as-built of the facilities if deemed necessary to confirm conformance with zoning regulations.

Title 23 – Building Code Requirements

The AMC section added for shelter units to be exempt from building review and inspections lists the items below for determining compliance with this exemption. All the following will need to be submitted in an Electrical Only Permit for approval by the department prior to construction.

1. **Shelter Unit Size:** Sleeping units gross floor area shall not exceed 120 square feet. Hygiene and community units shall not exceed 400 square feet. Gross floor area is defined as the floor area measure from the inside face of exterior walls. A community unit may be used to house multiple sleeping units. Sleeping units shall be separated by 1-hour rated fire partitions when installed within a single community unit.

AMC 15.10.140 describes maximum density for sleeping units that would be applicable to the shelters: One occupant requires 70 square feet. Two occupants utilizing a bunk bed only require 70 square feet; otherwise, two occupants require 120 square feet. Three occupants, with two utilizing a bunk bed, require 120 square feet.

Please provide floor plans to document the size of the proposed units along with the proposed number of occupants.

2. **Structural Design Criteria:** Structures shall be capable of supporting 20 psf roof snow load and be able to resist 95 mph allowable wind speed (or 125 mph ultimate wind speed). ***Please provide documentation that the structures can support these loads.*** This may be documented by manufacturer drawings stating this design criteria or a letter or report from the manufacturer certifying this design criteria is met.
3. **Overtuning Restraint:** Units shall be restrained for overturning to resist 95 mph allowable wind speed (or 125 mph ultimate wind speed). This shall be designed and stamped by a civil or structural engineer licensed in any state. ***Please provide an engineer stamped design for resisting wind overturning forces.***
4. **Fire Resistant Finish:** Wall and ceiling panel interior finishes shall be a Class C finish material by ASTM E84 (i.e. have a flame spread index not to exceed 200 and a smoke developed index no to exceed 450). An example of finish material would be the gypsum wall board (a.k.a. drywall) on the face of a wall and ceiling. ***Please provide documentation of the interior finish materials that meet this requirement.*** This may be through manufacturer specifications or ICC Evaluation Service Report (ICC-ESR). Alternatives may be considered upon submittal.
5. **Unit Spacing (See Figure A below for an example):**
 - a. Units may be in clusters of up to eight (8) units per cluster. Clusters of units shall be located ten (10) feet minimum from permanent structures, property lines, support structures (e.g. hygiene structure or other community shelter unit), and other clusters.
 - b. In clusters, a minimum five (5) feet shall be provided on sides subject to snow shedding. Snow shedding is expected on the low end of the roof slope; in cases where the structure have effectively flat roofs, the intended side for snow shedding/clearing shall be proposed. Units are allowed to share snow shedding space.

Please provide a site plan showing the proposed unit/cluster layout and adjacent structures on the site, including the direction of intended snow shedding. This may be shown on the electrical plans as long as dimensions are shown and units are named (e.g. cluster A, unit 1-8, or hygiene unit 1, etc.).

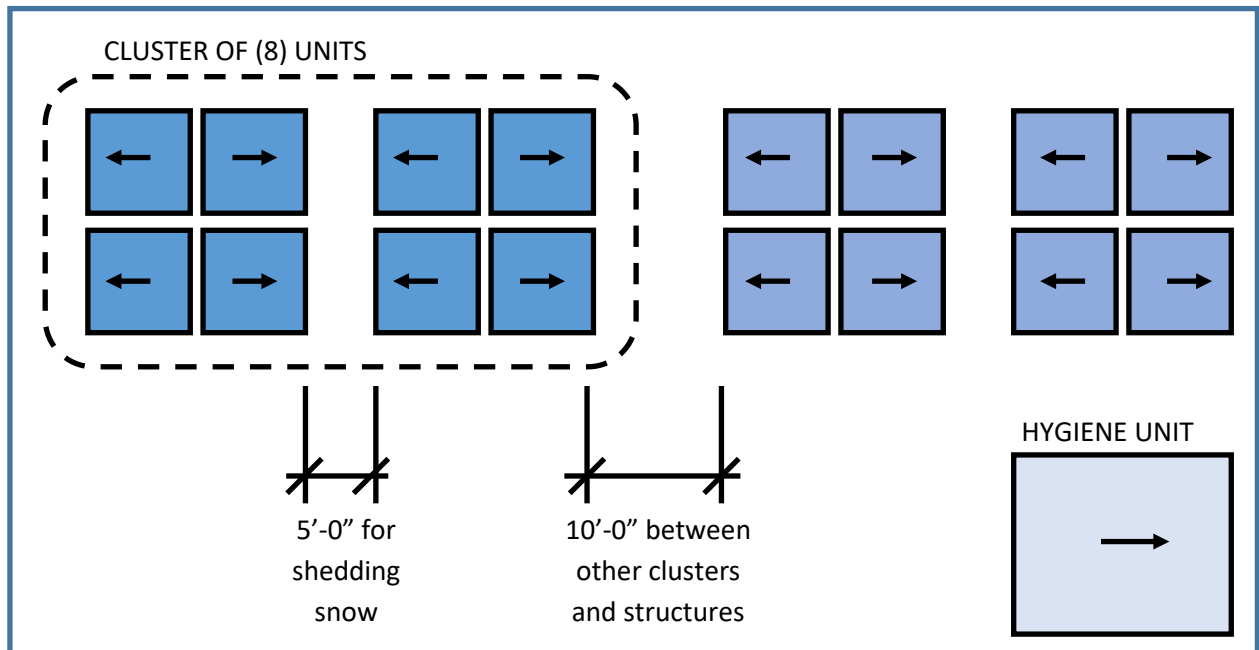


Figure A: Example of unit clusters with snow shedding direction noted.

6. **Toilet and Bathing Facilities and Trash Services:** If a hygiene unit for toilet and bathing facilities is not provided, an alternative shall be proposed. Mobile toilet and bathing facilities (i.e. units on a trailer) are an acceptable option for providing this service; facilities within the primary structure may be utilized as applicable when proper access is provided for shelter occupants. Trash service (e.g. an accessible dumpster) is required. Toilet and bathing facilities, by the International Building Code, would be required within **500'** of the shelter units. Trash service, for serviceability, should be within **1000'** of the shelter units. **Please provide on the plan the location and nature of the facilities and services requested and distance from the proposed shelter units.** This may be shown on the electrical plans.

Building code requires a minimum number of toilet and bathing facilities based on the occupant load. We will not review this as part of your permit, but this could be enforced if determined to be a health and safety violation. Below is the required number of toilets and bathing facilities by code.

- a. **For toilet facilities:** Provide one (1) toilet and sink for every ten (10) occupants. For a 20-occupant facility, this would require two (2) toilets and two (2) sinks.
 - b. **For bathing facilities:** Provide one (1) shower or bathtub for every eight (8) occupants. For a 20-occupant facility, this would require 3 showers or bathtubs.
7. **Fire Marshal Approval:** Units shall comply with fire code and operational processes as determined by the Fire Marshal. These items may vary depending on the specific location and arrangement of units and accessibility by fire officials, but the following shall apply at a minimum:
 - a. Provide an Anchorage Fire Department approved (and currently serviced) minimum size 5lb, A,B,C class fire extinguisher in each unit with a minimum rating of 2A:10B:C.

- b. Provide operable smoke alarms in each sleeping unit secured within a tamper resistant guard. When multiple sleeping units are housed within a community unit, the smoke alarms within the community unit shall be interconnected.
- c. Propane tank (if applicable) must be protected from vehicle impact and located in accordance with fire code (to be confirmed from site plan).
- d. Unit locations shall not impact fire lanes or emergency vehicle access to the units or nearby structures (to be confirmed from site plan).
- e. Provide a Fire Safety and Evacuation: A plan needs to be provided that shows the locations of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers; this can be show on the electrical or architectural plan. A fire safety plan will include operational maintenance of unit life-safety components such as routine verification of smoke alarm operability, combustible storage, and clearance from heat sources. The evacuation plan should also include a description of escape and evacuation procedures and gathering locations and provide a way to verify all occupants are accounted for.

Please provide a plan that shows the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in each sleeping unit and the propane tank (if applicable). This may be shown on the electrical plans.

- 8. **Electrical Design:** An electrical permit is required by this code, with the work being completed by a licensed electrical contractor. When installation involves more than one sleeping unit, an electrical design sealed by an Alaska licensed engineer is required. ***Please provide electrical design drawings for review.***

The code references National Electrical Code (NEC) 550.4(A), which is for Mobile Homes and Manufactured Homes in Mobile Home Parks. Depending on the proposed facility, it may be more applicable to use NEC 590 for temporary structures, since this would include emergency structures. Clarification of intent on drawings is preferable, however this can be determined in field if necessary. At a minimum:

- a. All underground wiring shall comply with NEC for permanent installations.
- b. Any receptacle within sleeping areas shall be AFCI protected.

Code requires a “code compliance inspection” of the installation be completed. This will be completed as an electrical inspection by one of our electrical inspectors.

- 9. **Additional Permitting:** The following conditions will require additional permitting or documentation.
 - a. **Water/wastewater supply or natural gas/propane supply:** ***Please provide drawings of intended installation as applicable with the Electrical Only Permit.*** Drawings shall be reviewed for conformance to the code for temporary installation and must be completed by a licensed contractor (discipline as applicable). Work shall be inspected by a municipal inspector for code compliance.
 - b. **Units/utilities built in the Right-of-Way:** All units are considered temporary since they will not have permanent foundations; however, installation within the Right-of-Way is not allowed. If access to the Right-of-Way is required for installation of utilities (e.g. plumbing, waste water, electrical, etc.), a separate Right-of-Way permit must be achieved. ***Please apply for Right-of-Way permit as applicable ([link](#), see “Application for Right-of-Way Permit”).***
 - c. **Site preparation:** When facilities will require site preparation, clearing, or grading, a Fill and Grade Permit in accordance with AG.09 will be required, as applicable. ***Please apply for a Fill and Grade permit as applicable ([link](#)).***

Inspection Requirements

Once a permit is issued, the work on the site may begin. During the project work, you will need to coordinate with our office on inspections. Below are the most common inspections to complete, but more may be required depending on your scope of work.

1. **Electrical Inspections:** There will be multiple electrical inspections at different phases of the project. Depending on the scope of work, these will vary, but these are some common inspections:
 - a. **Underground Electrical:** To be made after all conduits are installed in a permanent manner and prior to pouring concrete slabs. Electrical systems installed underground and exterior to any building must be inspected prior to covering trenches (e.g. backfilling).
 - b. **Electrical Rough:** To be done after wiring system, including grounding conductor, has been installed in approved boxes, cabinets, and service equipment. Switches, receptacles, and fixtures are not to be installed at the time of rough-in.
 - c. **Final Electrical:** The electrical system shall be completed in its entirety. All electrical equipment and mechanical equipment shall be third party certified (for example, UL certified).
2. **Final Fire:** Inspection to be made when project is complete, and all fire detection (i.e. smoke alarms) and suppression systems (i.e. fire extinguishers) are functional. Building numbers and Knox boxes shall be installed. Fire inspector will verify the site layout aligns with approved site plan and fire access is not disturbed.
3. **Final Zoning:** Inspection to be made when project is complete. Zoning inspector will verify site aligns with the approved site plan and additional Title 21 requirements as applicable.

Permit Close Out (Certificate of Completion) Requirements

To close your permit, you will need to complete all “Final” Inspections. Typically, this will include Final Electrical, Final Fire, and Final Zoning. If additional scope exists (such as plumbing or gas connections), additional final inspections may be required. Once all Final Inspections are completed, you can come in to the Permit Counter to close your permit and receive a **Certificate of Completion**. This will signify you’ve completed the project in conformance with applicable Building and Zoning codes.



Greg Soule, Building Official
January 13, 2025

For convenience, a checklist of the specific items for submittal are provided below. Additional items may be required depending on the proposed facility and site plan provided. See further explanation of requirements on pages 1 through 5.

Item for review	Expected document	Reviewer	Provided?
Unit sizes	Shelter plans	Zoning	
Structural capacity	Shelter manufacturer certification	Zoning	
Wind restraint	Engineer stamped drawing	Zoning	
Fire-resistant finish	Material specification	Fire	
Unit spacing	Site Plan	Fire/Zoning	
Toilet/bathing facilities	Site Plan	Zoning	
Trash services	Site Plan	Zoning	
Fire extinguisher/smoke detector	Site plan or shelter plans	Fire	
Propane tank location (if applicable)	Site plan	Fire	
Fire access (to be verified)	Site plan	Fire	
Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan	Plan letter or description	Fire	
Electrical design (stamped if applicable)	Electrical drawings	Electrical	
Water/wastewater supply (if applicable)	Plumbing drawings	Plumbing	
Natural gas/propane supply (if applicable)	Plumbing drawings	Plumbing	
Right-of-Way permit (if applicable)	See Right-of-Way for details	ROW	
Fill and Grade permit (if applicable)	See AG.09 for details	Varies	
Determine address	Site Plan	Addressing	
Zoning use	Zoning use description	Zoning	