

Utility Permits in Pennsylvania



Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation

Why are Utility Permits required in Pennsylvania?

The regulation governing the location and construction of utility facilities and other structures within the State highway Right-of-Way is critical to ensure the following:



Structural Integrity of the Highway



Economy of Maintenance



Preservation of Proper Drainage



Safe and Convenient Passage of Traffic



Right-of-Way

The Right-of-Way is the area which has been acquired by PennDOT for highway purposes. The Right-of-Way allows the public the "right of passage" along state owned roadways. The Right-of-Way can vary in width and generally extends beyond the edge of paved roads and shoulders. Permitted utility poles are generally located at the edge of the right-of-way.

Utility Permits

PennDOT has developed a checklist to assist utility companies, developers, or engineers in submitting applications for Highway Occupancy Permits (HOPs). To view the checklist, visit:

[Applicant Checklist for Utility Highway Occupancy Permit.](#)

For more information on permitting requirements and regulations, visit:

[PennDOT Pub. 282: Highway Occupancy Permit Operations Manual](#) and [Title 67, Chapter 459.](#)

HOW DO I KNOW...If sidewalk or curb is along a state-owned roadway?

State-owned roadways are identified in the [Road Segment Inventory \(RMSSEG\)](#) which is a part of PennDOT's Roadway Management System (RMS).

WHEN...A permit IS needed?

- Placing of utility facilities or other structures, or opening of the surface within the state highway right-of-way.
- Any work performed on or across a limited access highway.

WHEN...A permit IS NOT needed?

- Modifying parts of existing permitted facilities (Ex. cable within a conduit, transformers on poles).
- Emergency utility repairs WITH an Emergency Permit Certificate or Card. [Title 67, Chapter 459.6.](#)
- Stringing of overhead utility lines on non-limited access highways.
- Accessing existing utility facilities through manholes in non-limited access.



Utility Permit Application Procedure

- Complete and submit the application via PennDOT's ePermitting System (EPS).
- The applicant on the permit must be the owner of the utility facility. A developer or property owner can be listed as a co-applicant.
- Include one complete set of detailed plans clearly indicating the following:
 - Location of surface opening
 - Horizontal and vertical dimensions of opening
 - Proposed utility installation and related highway features:
 - Center line
 - Edges of pavement
 - Outside edges of shoulder
 - Curbing
 - Guide rail
 - Highway drainage structures
 - Right-of-Way line
- Permit fees may be paid to the department by credit card, check, or money order, in the amount set forth in [Title 67, Chapter 459.4](#). Applicants can participate in a monthly billing system rather than paying at time of permit issuance.
- [Title 67, Chapter 459.4](#) provides guidance on fee exceptions
- Include a Traffic Control Plan established according to PennDOT PATA Figures: [Pub. 213](#). Provide a project specific Traffic Control Plan if one of the following conditions are met:
 - Work is on a limited access highway
 - A travel lane will be closed during hours of darkness
 - It's necessary to completely close a highway to perform the work
- Submit the required documents listed above via PennDOT's ePermitting System (EPS) at least 30 days prior to the anticipated start of work.
- Utility Insurance: If a significant amount of work is being performed within the right-of-way, the Department may require proof of insurance.
- Guidance to frequently asked utility permit questions can be found in PennDOT [Publication 282, section 2.8](#).



Subsurface Utility Fast Facts

- Subsurface utilities shall be placed outside the pavement or shoulder unless not feasible.
- Attaching a utility facility to a PennDOT-owned bridge requires a Bridge Occupancy License (BOL). A BOL application may be submitted via [PennDOT's ePermitting System \(EPS\)](#). An annual rental fee may apply.
- Subsurface utilities can be installed using one of three different methods:
 - ① Drilling, boring, or tunneling
 - ② Open trenching across highway
 - ③ Open trenching parallel to highway
- Each of these methods have specific requirements, refer to [Title 67, Chapter 459](#).
- For a subsurface opening of not more than 500 linear feet, the Form M-949C can be used as an alternative to the applicant providing their own utility plan.



Aboveground Utility Fast Facts

- New poles and other aboveground facilities must be placed outside the highway Clear Zone, as close to the right-of-way line as possible. The Clear Zone width varies based on traffic volumes and vehicle speeds, refer to [Pub. 282](#).
- If new or replacement aboveground facilities cannot be placed adjacent to the right-of-way line, documentation to verify why the placement is not practicable must be provided.
- Aboveground Crossings:
 - The facility must be publicly or privately owned and serve the public.
 - The permittee must maintain its facility and keep it in good order and repair.
 - A damaged facility must be promptly removed, repaired, or otherwise made safe by the permittee.
 - The permittee must change or relocate its facility at its own cost and expense if it interferes with future highway alterations.
 - A permit will not be issued to install aboveground facilities at a location which PennDOT determines to have a high accident potential. The following criteria will be considered:
 - Are supporting structures placed outside the State highway right-of-way?
 - Are supporting structures protected from errant vehicles, and vice versa?
 - Are structures crossing the highway at least 18 feet above the pavement and shoulder?
 - Is the crossing structure designed to preclude any type of material from dropping onto vehicles, pedestrians, or the surface within the right-of-way?
- Refer to [Title 67, Chapter 459](#) for the full regulations relating to aboveground facilities.

Instructions for Electronic Submission via PennDOT's ePermitting System (EPS)

- This application provides any utility company, developer, or engineer that needs to obtain a utility permit with an integrated site plan.
- Complete the required fields and click 'Save'. This will generate an application number and allow you to attach documents before submitting the application to PennDOT.
- Use the Attachments section to upload any documents associated with your application.
- Unless paying by credit card or participating in the monthly billing program, prior to permit issuance, a check, payable to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, must be provided to the appropriate District office. The application number must be included on the check.
- Refer to the [EPS Training Basics](#) for ePermitting assistance.



What to Expect Next After Your Application is Submitted



The applicant can expect the application to be reviewed within 30 days of receipt by PennDOT.

Contact a permit coordinator for assistance
[HOP District and Central Office Contacts](#)

The contractor must contact the [PA One Call](#) prior to excavation.