

# Planning and Development Storm Damage Repair Permitting Process and Information

Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management is requesting that all flood-related damage be reported to document the impacts of the storms. FEMA will also use this information to help determine if Whatcom County qualifies for a federal disaster declaration. If the declaration is authorized, some financial assistance may be made available to offset the costs associated with the repair of flood damage.

Additional information for impacted homes and businesses can be found [here](#).

Damage Assessment Form can be found [here](#).

## **Structural Damage: (existing building/structure)**

If you have experienced damage to your home or business due to the recent weather event, Planning and Development Services (PDS) is ready to help you quickly assess your property damage and determine your permit path. It is important that you carefully and safely assess any structural damage to your home or business. Do not enter the building if you observe the structural integrity is compromised.

If you have sustained damage to your home or business from the storm, please take photos to document the damage and verify that repairs are necessary. Submit the photos to [epermits@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:epermits@co.whatcom.wa.us) or make an appointment with our Permit Center Staff by using our [online form](#) or call 360-778-5900. Permit Center staff will use our Building Services Emergency Repair Permit policy to assess your situation and determine if you will be eligible to use this expedited process.

Our Building Services Emergency Repair Review process allows you to get to work quickly to repair your home/business and the fees assessed are reduced to reflect the simplified process. Permit Center staff will discuss the damage and your planned scope of work to complete the repairs. If it is determined you can do an Emergency Repair a Public Service Inspector will then come out to your location to verify the damage and permit scope of work. If the damage is more extensive it may require you to pay for additional inspections. They may also find the repairs are outside the scope of work qualifying for an Emergency Repair and you may be required to obtain additional permits or assessments to ensure the structure is safe. Any damage to the electrical system due to flooding or impact from debris will require a separate permit through Washington State [Labor and Industries](#) for the electrical work.

## **Storm Debris:**

Another possible issue you may need to address is debris caused or deposited by a storm. If you have downed branches, drift wood, sediment, rocks or sand deposited by a storm surge, high water or high wind you will have to be sure to remove it in a safe way that is *within the correct best management practices outlined in whatever Environmental regulation your property is subject to--depending on the placement and severity of the debris you may or may not be required to obtain a permit.*

Property owners may conduct emergency construction activities within critical areas and buffers to alleviate health, safety, and welfare issues that need to be addressed immediately, and cannot wait for a full permit review. However, only minimal construction to replace existing structures is all that could be allowed; any new or expanded structures will require additional review, permits, and fees, or will need to be removed and restored to pre-emergency conditions. Please view our [Emergency Repairs FAQ](#) for guidance on how to address damage caused by a storm event. If you are near a shoreline you are subject to the Shoreline Management Program (SMP) and must proceed carefully to ensure the sensitive nature of the Shoreline is not compromised. The SMP along with the [Department of Ecology](#) determine how any work done within the Shoreline is completed. We have developed a [Shoreline Cleanup FAQ](#) document to help guide your approach to your cleanup efforts.

## **Related Links:**

\*Washington State Labor & Industries information regarding [Flood Safety & Hazards After a Flood](#)

\*Whatcom County Emergency Management [Flood Response](#)

\*Whatcom County Health Department [Flood Related Public Health Information](#)

\*[Labor and Industries Electrical Permitting](#)

\*[Department of Ecology Shoreline Management](#)

\*PDS [Shoreline Management](#) Resource Page

\*U.S. Small Business Administration [News Release](#) and [Disaster Loan Fact Sheet](#)