



CABINS

Minimum Floor Area and Room Dimensions

- Cabins must be built to follow International Residential Code (IRC) and National Electric Code (NEC) requirements as adopted/amended by Larimer County.
- Cabins must have one or more habitable rooms (space for living, sleeping or eating) at least 70 square feet in floor area and at least seven foot minimum in length and width. Kitchens are exempt from minimum sizes.
- At least seven-foot ceiling height is required for all habitable rooms, hallways, and basements, with 6' 8" minimum required for bathrooms and laundry rooms.

Additional Information & Requirements

1. Cabins must be designed and built to comply with Larimer County's snow, wind and foundation requirements. Cabins must be installed on a permanent foundation. Building plans, permits and inspection approvals are required for cabins. Most cabins require engineered plans, because they are built in the High Wind and/or heavy snow area of the county, where site design criteria exceed prescriptive building code standards.

2. If plumbing is installed in the cabin, all plumbing lines shall be equipped with drain down valves to remove water from the various systems to prevent freeze damage. Drain lines must also be protected with approved anti-freeze during winter months to prevent freeze damage. It is the owner's responsibility to provide the required maintenance to protect the plumbing system. All plumbing work must be inspected and approved.

3. Cabins with no heat or heated only by solid fuel are exempt from energy code requirements such as insulation and window efficiency. Cabins with primary heat sources (gas or electric) must comply with county energy efficiency requirements including minimum insulation levels in exterior walls, basements, crawlspaces, and attics. Wall insulation must be covered by an approved vapor retarder. Combustible insulation facings must be covered. Fireplaces and wood stoves must be inspected, approved, and pass federal, state and county clean air requirements. Heating and cooling equipment must meet energy and mechanical code rules.

DEFINITIONS

A "**cabin**" is defined in the Larimer County Land Use Code as:

A structure that contains at least one habitable room for living, sleeping, eating, cooking or sanitation that is designed, arranged and intended to be occupied by one occupant or living unit.

1. A cabin that includes a primary heat source and living facilities for sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation will be classified as a single-family dwelling.
2. Cabins are permitted in the applicable zoning districts (see Larimer County Land Use Code Section 3.3.3) only in the west half of Range 70, in Ranges 71-78 and in Townships 11 and 12, Ranges 68-78.
3. A Cabin is a principal use that precludes a property owner from having more than one cabin or a cabin and a dwelling on the same parcel.

Note: Cabins may be lived in year-round.

Primary Heat Source

A heating system capable of maintaining room temperatures at 68 degrees Fahrenheit at a point three feet above the floor and two feet from exterior walls in all habitable rooms during cold inclement weather when the structure is not occupied.

Additional Information & Requirements



4. Smoke detectors are required on each story, in each sleeping room, and outside each sleeping room. Carbon monoxide detectors are required in each separate sleeping area within 15 feet of each sleeping room for cabins with an attached garage or containing fuel-fired appliances. Code-compliant egress windows are required from each basement, sleeping room and sleeping loft. Smoke detectors, egress windows, and carbon monoxide detectors must be inspected and approved at the final building inspection.

5. All guards, handrails and stairs must be inspected and approved as complying with adopted Larimer County Building Code requirements, including rise, run, width, opening size and height.

6. All electrical work must comply with the latest NEC adopted by Larimer County and pass inspection by county electrical inspectors. For cabins using battery or generator systems, consult the electrical inspectors for specific requirements. Cabins with a kitchen, living area, bedroom or bed area, and a bathroom are considered dwellings under the NEC and must follow all dwelling electrical requirements, with or without primary heat. **Consulting with an electrical inspector to see how these requirements might affect your project now and in the future is highly recommended. Call an electrical inspector at (970) 498-7660.**

7. A letter of completion confirming all required inspection approvals is issued for a cabin. No certificate of occupancy (CO) is issued for a cabin—COs are issued for single-family dwellings and commercial structures only. All required inspection approvals must be obtained prior to using or occupying the cabin, (i.e. setback, foundation, framing, wildfire, roof, final, as well as plumbing, electrical, gas, woodstove, heat/vent, insulation etc. when installed).

8. A permit and final inspection approval is required from the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment. Cabins may use holding tanks or other approved types of sewer systems. **Consulting with the Health Department on system requirements is highly recommended.** (Please address both your current and future use plans at the start of your project.) Contact the Health Department at (970) 498-6775.

9. Consult with the Larimer County Wildfire Safety Coordinator for specific requirements at your building site. Most cabins are located in the Wildfire Hazard Area and require minimum Class B fire-rated roof coverings, minimum Class C fire-rated siding materials or one-hour rated exterior shell, non-combustible siding or ground cover for three feet minimum from grade, spark arresters for chimneys serving solid- or liquid-fueled fireplaces, woodstoves, barbecues, or decorative heating appliances, and defensible space around the perimeter. Final inspection approval from the Wildfire Safety Coordinator is typically required under cabin permits. The contact phone number is 498-5301.

A separate permit is required to convert a cabin into a single-family dwelling or other use (see Page 3 for more information).

HOW DO I CLASSIFY MY CABIN AS A SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING?

A cabin does not receive a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). A cabin must be classified as a single-family dwelling in order to obtain a CO, and all of the following items must be present:

1. Approved electrical system for a single-family residence.
2. Approved sanitation system with permit/approvals by Larimer County Health Department or the sanitation district having jurisdiction. (Indoor bathroom and kitchen sink **are required**).
3. Approved potable water system meeting requirements of county-adopted Plumbing Code; approval of other agencies is required depending upon type of system—public water system, well or cistern.
4. Approved water heater installed.
5. Approved “primary” heat source. Such systems must be gas or electric unless another system has been approved by the Larimer County Building Official as an alternate method of heating. Cabins with primary heat sources must meet county energy and mechanical code rules, which could require adding insulation or changing out windows. If you are building a cabin, it is a good idea to build it to the standards of a single-family dwelling now so that later retrofits will not be required. Energy-efficient cabins are also more comfortable and save occupants money on heating and cooling.

If any one of the above listed items is NOT present, the structure will be classified as a **cabin and no CO will be issued**. (See the previous eight listed items concerning Cabins.)

Regardless of whether a CO is issued or not, all required inspection approvals for the cabin must be obtained prior to using or occupying the structure, including but not limited to:

- Setback, footings, foundation, framing, roof, wildfire, etc.
- Plumbing, heating, gas, fireplace/woodstove, electrical, insulation, when installed.
- Life-safety issues including egress windows, railings, clearances to combustible materials, smoke detectors, CO alarms when required, address numbers, etc.

Larimer County Department of Health & Environment must inspect and approve:

- Private sewage disposal system installation

