

Garage Permits and Building Codes

Most new garages need a permit or approval. US codes set fire separation and floor rules, England allows many garages without planning permission, and a home car lift must be ALI certified and sit on concrete that meets the lift maker's table.

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Codes change by country, state and town. This guide gives the main rules and where to read them. Always confirm with your local building department or planning authority before you build.

United States: the International Residential Code

The International Residential Code (IRC) is in use or adopted in 49 US states (ALI, 2024 IRC Chapter 3). Many towns amend it. A Washington State tip sheet sets out these 2021 IRC rules for an attached garage (MyBuildingPermit.com, Tip Sheet 06):

- **Walls and attic next to the house (Table R302.6).** At least 1/2-inch gypsum board, or equivalent, on the garage side.
- **Habitable rooms above the garage.** At least 5/8-inch Type X gypsum board, or equivalent.
- **Doors into the house (R302.5.1).** Solid wood or solid or honeycomb-core steel at least 1-3/8 inches thick, or a 20-minute rated door. The door must self-close and self-latch. It must not open into a sleeping room.
- **Ducts (R302.5.2).** Ducts in the garage must be at least No. 26 gauge sheet metal, with no openings into the garage.

Floor. The IRC says garage floors must be an approved noncombustible material. The parking area must slope so liquids move to a drain or toward the main vehicle door. Older editions number this rule differently (InterNACHI). A home inspector's summary cites it as R309.1 (How To Look At A House). The code sets no minimum slope figure, so ask your designer.

Car lifts. The 2024 IRC adds Section R317.7. A home lift must be listed and labeled to ANSI/ALI ALCTV. It must be installed to that standard, its listing and the maker's instructions. It must not be in the habitable space of the dwelling (ALI, 2024 IRC Chapter 3). ANSI approved the newest edition, ALCTV: 2025, on October 1, 2025 (ALI, ANSI/ALI ALCTV: 2025).

United Kingdom (England)

Planning. The Planning Portal says you can build a garage on the land around your house without planning permission in many cases (Planning Portal, Garages). Garages count as outbuildings. Permitted development limits include (Planning Portal, Outbuildings):

- not forward of the principal elevation;
- single storey, with eaves no higher than 2.5 m;
- overall height no more than 4 m with a dual-pitched roof, or 3 m for any other roof;
- no more than 2.5 m high within 2 m of a boundary;
- no more than half the land around the original house covered by buildings.

A listed building needs planning permission for any outbuilding. Designated land, such as a conservation area, has stricter rules.

Building regulations. An attached garage normally needs building regulations approval. A detached garage normally does not, except for electrical work, if its floor area is no more than 15 m². It also does not if it is 15 to 30 m² and at least 1 m from any boundary or built of substantially non-combustible materials (Planning Portal, Garages). If your garage is larger, plan for approval.

Canada (Ontario)

Ontario requires a building permit for any new building over ten square metres (Ontario, Building permits). In Toronto, a detached garage, workshop or carport larger than 10 m² (107 sq ft) needs a permit. So does any accessory structure attached to a building or with plumbing, whatever its size (City of Toronto, When Do I Need a Building Permit?). A Toronto garage application needs the details of the concrete floor slab, including concrete strength and reinforcement (City of Toronto, Garages and Carports).

Australia (New South Wales)

In NSW, a garage can be built as complying development on lots zoned R1, R2, R3, R4 and RU5 of at least 200 m² and at least 6 m wide. A detached garage can be at most 4.5 m above ground level. Garage door openings facing a road can total at most 3.2 m on lots 8 m to 12 m wide, or 6 m on lots over 12 m wide (NSW Planning, Carports and garages fact sheet). If a garage does not fit these rules, contact your local council. Other states have their own rules.

Slab requirements for car lifts

Lift makers set their own concrete rules. BendPak requires 3,000 psi minimum concrete, cured at least 28 days. It needs a core sample test on existing concrete. Its XPR-9 two-post and HD-7/9 four-post series need at least 4.25 in. (108 mm); its XPR-12 series needs 6 in. (152 mm). Anchors must sit at least 6 in. from seams and joints. Do not install a lift over a basement or on an upper floor without the architect's written authorization (BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements). Use the table for your exact lift model.

Sources

- [MyBuildingPermit.com, Construction Tip Sheet 06: Residential Garage Separation \(2021 IRC\)](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [InterNACHI, Attached Garage Fire Containment](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [How To Look At A House, What are the minimum code requirements for a residential garage?](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Automotive Lift Institute, 2024 IRC Chapter 3: Automotive Lift Requirements](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Automotive Lift Institute, ANSI/ALI ALCTV: 2025 Standard for Automotive Lifts](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Planning Portal, Smart Search: Garages](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Planning Portal, Planning Permission: Outbuildings](#), accessed 2026-10-29

- [Ontario, Building permits \(Citizen's guide to land use planning\)](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [City of Toronto, When Do I Need a Building Permit?](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [City of Toronto, Garages and Carports](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [NSW Planning, Carports and garages: Rules for exempt and complying development](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements for BendPak Lifts](#), accessed 2026-10-29

Frequently asked questions

Do I need planning permission for a garage in England?

Often not. The Planning Portal says garages can be built on the land around your house without planning permission, within permitted development limits such as single storey, 2.5 m eaves and 4 m overall height with a dual-pitched roof. Listed buildings and designated land have stricter rules.

What fire separation does a US attached garage need?

IRC Table R302.6 calls for at least 1/2-inch gypsum board on the garage side between the garage and the house, and at least 5/8-inch Type X gypsum board under habitable rooms above the garage. Your local code may add amendments.

Does a home car lift need a permit?

Ask your building department. The 2024 IRC requires a home lift to be listed and labeled to ANSI/ALI ALCTV and installed to the lift maker's instructions, so an inspector can check it.