



# The Town of Richlands, Virginia

200 Washington Square  
Richlands, VA 24641

## Requirements for Sheds, Carports and Garages

### Your guide to Town Zoning Permits

**PLEASE NOTE:** For questions about any potential projects consult our Zoning Department at phone number 276-964-4856.

#### What is a shed?

The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code defines a shed as a structure that has all of the following characteristics:

1. It is detached, one story structure.
2. It is used for tool storage, playhouse or similar use.
3. It does not exceed 10 feet tall at the eave height.
4. The maximum distance that it can be off the ground is 18 inches.

The structure is made of light frame construction, with vertical and horizontal structural elements primarily formed by a repetitive wood or light-gauge metal framing members. New product technology has also introduced plastic panel products as an acceptable tool-storage solution.

A structure that does not comply with these criteria will be treated as any other detached structure.

#### What is a Carport?

A Carport is a structure open on at least two sides and used generally for vehicles. It may be attached to the house or be free standing. The floor surface can be concrete, gravel or asphalt. If the structure does not open on at least two sides, it shall be considered a garage and will have to comply with all code requirements for garages.

#### What Permits do I need?

All accessory structures at the very least need a **Zoning Permit** before installation and best practice is to check even before ordering any building. Different areas in the Town of Richlands have different Zoning districts found in the land use ordinance for setbacks and height restrictions. Some subdivisions may not allow the accessory structures per certain deed restrictions. The definition of a **Building Accessory Structure** per the Richlands Town Code 154.002 is: A subordinate structure customarily incidental to and located upon the same lot occupied by the main structure. No such accessory structure shall be used for housekeeping purposes.

The code makes no distinction between:

- A prefabricated structure that is delivered on-site completely assembled and a structure that is erected on-site.
- A metal, wood or panelized building.

The following permits are required:

- A Zoning Permit for all accessory structures.
- A Building Permit is all that is typically is required. The person who assumes ultimate responsibility, either the homeowner or the contractor, and they must apply.
- An Electrical Permit will be required if the structure will have electricity.
- A Mechanical or Gas Permit may be required if the structure will be heated mechanically.
- A Plumbing Permit will be required if the structure will have water.

## **What are the Code Requirements?**

### **Structures up to 256 square feet (examples: 12' x 12' or 16' x 16')**

A shed, carport or light framed structure up to 256 square feet shall be built in accordance with the code and be anchored to the ground- typical anchorage systems include auger type or strap type tie-downs.

### **Structures 257 square feet and larger (examples: 20' x 20', 16' x 25' or 24' x32')**

All structures 257 square feet and larger shall have approved footings installed per section R403 of the VRC. The Foundation Code sections are listed below.

## **Construction Documents**

Construction documents are required to be submitted to and reviewed by the Building Official except when no permit is required or when the Building Official determines the work is of a minor nature. Basic drawings showing a dimensioned floor plan, elevations, framing plans indicating structural member sizes and on center spacing and a foundation plan with anchorage details will generally suffice. Plans for prefabricated metal carports, metal garages and similar structures that are not designed prescriptively in accordance with the USBC, may be required to be sealed by a registered design professional and may require additional engineered details in accordance with VRC Section 109.3.

## **Anchorage**

Anchoring of these structures is of paramount importance and required by the code regardless of the size, type of structure, or exemption from application for permit. For sheds that meet the exception criteria described above and are anchored directly to the ground, auger type or strap type anchors installed in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions are generally acceptable. In many cases, anchoring can be designed and installed prescriptively in accordance with VRC Section R403.1.6. For structures where alternative anchoring methods are utilized, there may be a need for wind loading and/or uplift analysis.