



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services  
**FARM/ AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEE  
HOUSING APPLICATION PROCEDURES**  
**ZONING DIVISION**

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Establishing farm employee housing for up to twelve dwelling units each designed for use by a single-family or household, or up to 36 beds in a group quarters requires a building permit. Additional permits and requirements such as grading and septic may be needed depending on the scope of the project. All applicants are required to a record document certifying that at least one family member who will occupy each housing unit is a farmworker as defined in the County's Zoning Ordinance prior to the issuance of a building permit.

The San Diego County Zoning Ordinance defines a Farm Employee as:

A person who derives more than half of their total livelihood in the service of another person as an employee engaged in active commercial agriculture. "Farm Employee" does not include the owner or lessee of a particular property, or a person engaged in construction, alteration, painting, or repair of a structure, logging, or land surveying. "Farm Employee" may include a person engaged in brush or timber clearing, land grading or leveling when such activity is being carried out in preparation for farming.

Farm employee housing consisting of five or more farm employees is an allowed use and housing units, requires approval of a building permit from Planning & Development Services and approval of a permit to operate from the State of California to operate an Employee Housing facility.

Farm Employee Housing of up to four farm employees housing units requires approval of a building permit from Planning & Development Services and is an allowed accessory use to an on-going commercial agriculture operation on that same parcel on which the housing is located or on another parcel under the same ownership provided that the provisions of Subsection f. of Section 6157 of the County Zoning Ordinance are met. Applicants should follow the **Pre-Application Process, and Building Permit Application Process** described in this document.

Farm employee housing projects must meet certain conditions. Summarized, the conditions are that: 1) There is a verified active agricultural enterprise on the property where the housing is located; 2) The housing is not subject to an active code violation; 3) A building permit has been approved (see "Pre-Application Process" for a list of required forms).

### **Requirements**

1. The number of living units is reasonably related to the number of farm employees required for commercial agriculture on the parcel on which the farm employee housing is located and, where applicable, on other land owned or leased and farmed by the applicant.
2. The location of Farm Employee Housing shall comply with the required main building setbacks.
3. Farm employee housing shall be occupied only by farm employees (and their families) engaged in Commercial Agricultural labor for an active Commercial Agricultural operation and shall not be otherwise occupied or rented.

**5510 OVERLAND AVE, SUITE 110, SAN DIEGO, CA 92123 • (858) 565-5981 • (888) 267-8770**

**[www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds)**



**County of San Diego, PDS, Zoning Division**  
**FARM / AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEE HOUSING APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

*Continued*

- 4. Farm employee housing shall be removed or converted to another allowed use at such time as the commercial agriculture to which it relates ceases operation for more than twelve consecutive months following the date of occupancy on the building permit issued for the farm employee housing.

Please carefully read all of the information in this guide and the forms required for the application package. An accurate and complete application will reduce delays in processing. **Please contact Planning & Development Services (PDS) at (858) 495-5201 if you have any questions or require assistance.**

**PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS**

Please complete these two steps prior to applying for a building permit with PDS.

- 1. **Department of Environmental Health (DEH) – 5500 Overland Ave, San Diego**  
Contact DEH at (858) 565-5173 to discuss proposed method of sewage disposal. If the project will not be connected to a sewer, a subsurface system may be required.

**PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS (cont.)**

- 2. **Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures (AWM) – 9325 Hazard Way, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92123-1217**  
Contact AWM at (858) 694-2739, for information concerning obtaining a **Verification of Agricultural Operation** available online at:  
[http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/awm/verification\\_ag.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/awm/verification_ag.html).  
The completed and signed Agricultural Enterprises form must be submitted with your application package.

**BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS**

A building permit must be obtained for either the construction of a building for the housing or the installation of a manufactured home. Inquire at the Zoning Information Counter first to make sure that the proposed building site meets zoning requirements.

It is the responsibility of the property owner where the housing is sited to provide this documentation whether or not the farm employee is employed at that site.

- 1. **Planning & Development Services – 5510 Overland Ave., San Diego**

Submit **completed** application package to Building Permit Counter.  
**Application Package:**

- i. Building Permit Application Form.....PDS-291
- ii. Mobilehome Installation Information, if applicable.....No Form No.

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*Continued*

- iii. **Three (3)** copies of a Plot Plan..... PDS-090
- iv. Fees.....Variable

The Building Permit Counter staff will check for active code compliance action on the subject property. It is the responsibility of the owner of the property where the housing is proposed to be located to provide all required documentation.

**2. Department of Environmental Health – 5500 Overland Ave, San Diego**

If the project is not to be served by a public sewer service, submittal of a preliminary septic layout with DEH at the time the Building Permit application is submitted is required. The Building Permit cannot be approved until the septic system is deemed satisfactory by DEH. DEH may require an on-site inspection. DEH may require a well sample if water is supplied by a new or existing well.

**Additional Requirements**

1. **GRADING:** Any fill over a foot in depth will require a compaction report by a registered civil engineer certifying the fill is compacted to a minimum of 90 percent. If more than 200 cubic yards of earth will be moved or if a cut or fill depth exceeds 8 feet, a grading permit is required. Contact the Department of Public Works (DPW), (858) 694-3267 (5510 Overland Ave, San Diego) about obtaining a grading permit. Grading in conjunction with a building permit and submitted at the same time or after the plan check, which meets PDS minor grading requirements may be submitted through PDS. Contact the Building Division (858)-565-5920 (5510 Overland Ave., San Diego) for more information. If you are brushing or moving less than 200 cubic yards of earth, check with the Zoning Information County (858) 565-5981 (5510 Overland Ave., San Diego) about the need for a brushing/clearing permit. Before building permit may be issued, any required compaction report must be submitted or, in the case of a grading permit, rough grading approval must be obtained.
2. **DRAINAGE:** At time of pre-application review (required prior to plan check submittal), the Pre review Counter staff will check whether flood control fees are required. If so, after permit application submittal, the applicant will be referred to the Flood Control Counter (858) 694-3267, Department of Public Works, 5510 Overland Ave., San Diego). Flood Control Counter staff will determine the amount of drainage fees required to be paid by the project applicant at the time of the issuance of the building permit. The Drainage Fee Form (DPW-381) must be completed and signed by the Flood Control Counter staff. The completed form should be returned to the Building Permit Counter at the time the building permit is issued.
3. **FIRE:** Early coordination with the fire district that serves your area is strongly encouraged regarding fees and costs you may incur for fire protection requirements. These requirements for employee housing may have significant additional costs associated with fire hydrants, sprinkling systems, water storage tanks and/or other local regulations.



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*Continued*

A fire mitigation form is required prior to issuance of a building permit. The fire mitigation form (PDS-308A) will be provided by the Building Permit Counter at the time you submit your plans for plan check. The fire mitigation letter should be taken to the fire district to be signed by a fire district official indicating the amount of fire mitigation fees required to be paid by the project applicant at the time of issuance of the building permit. After the fire letter has been signed, it should be returned to the Building Permit Counter at the time the building permit is issued.

4. **WATER:** If the property is not served by a public water system, contact DEH at (858) 565-5173 (5500 Overland Ave., San Diego) regarding fees and regulations for the installation and use of a well. If the property is to be served by a public water system, a public water system letter is required before issuance of a building permit. The public water system letter (PDS-510) will be provided by the Building Permit Counter at the time you submit your plans for plan check. The water letter should be taken to the water district to be signed by a water district official indicating that all requirements of the district have been met and water service will be provided to the subject property. After the water letter is signed, it should be returned to the Building Permit Counter at the time the building permit is issued.
5. **SEWER:** A public sewer service letter is required before issuance of a building permit if the project is not going to be served by an on-site septic system. The sewer service letter (PDS-510) will be provided by the Building Permit Counter at the time you submit your plans for plan check. The sewer service letter should be taken to the sewer service agency to be signed by the agency official indicating that all requirements of the district have been met and sewer service will be provided to the subject parcel. After the sewer service letter is signed, it should be returned to the Building Permit Counter at the time the building permit is issued.
6. **SCHOOLS:** A school letter is required before issuance of a building permit. The school letter (PDS-510) will be provided by the Building Permit Counter at the time you submit your plans for plan check. The school letter should be taken to the school district(s) to be signed by a school official indicating all requirements of the district have been met and that any required school fees have been paid. After the school letter is signed, it should be returned to the Building Permit Counter before or at the time the building permit is issued.
6. **MANUFACTURED HOMES:** Only mobile homes constructed between September 15, 1971 and June 14, 1976; and manufactured homes constructed on or after June 15, 1976 that have been issued an insignia of approval by the state of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) or have been certified under the National Mobilehome Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C Section 5401 et seq.) may be permanently located on a private lot only upon compliance with the requirements set forth in PDS Form 103. Please refer to PDS Form 103, available online at <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/pds/docs/pds103.pdf>, for more information on placing a certified manufactured home on a private lot.