

Hydrogen Fueling Station Permit Planning Tool

A Guide to Successful Hydrogen Fueling Station Permit Procurement in California

Permits are required by California law to ensure public health, safety, and protect existing property. A streamlined permitting process means a shorter road to construction and more opportunities for investment. This guide outlines the steps of permit procurement for deploying hydrogen fueling station infrastructure in California, from early project communication to application components to review and approval.

Note that an Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) may be a federal, state, local, or other regional department or individual depending on your area. It could be a fire marshal and/or the respective building permit department. Though specifics vary by the AHJ, all processes are aided by early planning and continuous communication. Additional documentation and filings may be necessary (e.g., CEQA, AB 970 planning and zoning documents), depending on your location. This planning tool may not reflect all requirements or steps in obtaining appropriate permits and serves as a quick resource to help commercial fleets get started.



1 PRE-APPLICATION OUTREACH

- **Determine and Contact Your AHJ.** In the event you do not have a site identified, AHJs may be able to assist in identifying locations most suitable for hydrogen station development.
 - Begin development of a Hydrogen Safety Plan and prepare for submission of a draft to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Hydrogen Safety Program (PNNL HSP) for review.
 - If you own the proposed site, relevant decision makers will provide approval. If you lease the site, the property owner must give approval through right of access or easement.
 - Refer to the Hydrogen Station Permitting Guidebook found at www.business.ca.gov to determine the appropriate AHJ.
- **Set Up Meetings with AHJ Authorities to Uncover Potential Issues Upfront.** Use these meetings to lay out the station plan and learn what permits may be required.
- **Maintain Open Communication.** Communication between the station developer, utility, site owner, and operator will ensure commitment to the station and smoother processes.

Contact your AHJ and project stakeholders.



2 PLANNING REVIEW

- **Planning Review Includes Four Areas of Approval.** These approval processes may vary in complexity, so **plan early**. Timelines for planning review vary, with **steps 1 and 2 below often requiring 6-12 months**.
 1. **Zoning** - Rules differ by AHJ, so refer to your jurisdiction's website for their General Plan or Specific Plan for more guidance.
 2. **Architectural Review** - This review ensures the project fits the local aesthetic. The review board may ask for specific roofing, landscaping, or painting design. Negotiations between the board and the project applicant are common.
 3. **CEQA** - In most cases (especially for projects operating out of existing gas stations), hydrogen stations do not require CEQA approval. If CEQA approval is required, check [CEQA Net](#) for references to other hydrogen station CEQA determinations and possible exemptions to allow expedited review.
 - a. If you are using an existing gas site, you may be able to add hydrogen "by right," but a Conditional Use Permit or variance request is required.
 4. **Fire Department Review** - Hydrogen stations must meet the California Building Code (Part 2) and the California Fire Code (Part 9) of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), the California Code of Regulations, and/or local amendments to these Codes. Project plans, notes, and calculations should show how the station will be designed to meet all required codes.



Plan early for four (4) approval processes.



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BUILDING REVIEW



- Once planning approval is granted, the building department conducts a review for safe installation and operation in compliance with the Title 24 CA Building Standards Code.
 - The review focuses on safety, structural design, and layout.
- To ensure success, **organize sections for each department** (building, electrical, fire, etc.) depending on your AHJ's requirements.
- During review, your AHJ will provide full comments. **Clearly address all revisions and resubmit for approval** in a timely manner.

Respond to building review and iterate with AHJ.



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CONSTRUCTION



- After all comments are addressed and your AHJ gives final building approval, construction may begin. Remember, projects may carry prevailing wage requirements.
- **Be prepared for inspections** (varying by jurisdiction) and **necessary encroachment permits** for any work impacting right-of-way. Permits for construction areas surrounding State highways can be found on the [Caltrans website](#).

Proceed with construction upon approval.



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COMMISSIONING



- Commissioning starts after construction is finished and the station developer submits a notice of completion.
- Several testing processes are required for commissioning including, but not limited to: dispenser testing per SAE J2601, fuel quality testing per SAE J2719, protocol confirmation, and other commercial testing.
- Upon completion of the final occupancy permit, the station can open for service.

Complete commissioning prior to opening.



TIPS & CONSIDERATIONS

- Balance detail and simplicity.
 - ✓ Include only the information requested to show compliance.
- The following sections of California Building Code contain information on hydrogen fueling stations:

✓ California Building Code, Part 2, Title 24	✓ California FireCode, Part 9, Title 24
✓ California Electrical Code, Part 3, Title 24	✓ National Fire Protection Association Code 55
✓ California Energy Code, Part 6, Title 24	✓ National Fire Protection Association Code 2
- While most hydrogen fueling stations will not require an air district permit, be sure to verify this with your local authority. Look for your CA Air District website [here](#).
- The State maintains a list of contacts that have experience in the permitting of hydrogen fueling stations in order to share insights and experiences and can share insights on this process. Contact zev@gobiz.ca.gov for more information.

For more information on hydrogen fueling station permitting, review the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development's [Hydrogen Station Permitting Guidebook](#).



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