Rebuilding After A Storm

Permitting Procedures for Repair and Rebuilding after a Storm: Coastal Residential & Commercial Structures

Flood and storm damage along Rhode Island's coast can be devastating when nor'easters and hurricanes hit. Knowing who to call and what to procedures to follow is the first step in being prepared for the challenge of home or business reconstruction and repair.

Rhode Island Flood Awareness and Climate Change Taskforce (RI FACCT)
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You Need to Know....

Substantially improved structures refers to any repair, addition, or other improvement of a building whose costs equal or exceed 50% of the market value of the structure before the start of construction. The local building official will request a detailed cost estimate for repairs before your building permit can be issued.

New or substantially improved residential or commercial buildings within Special Flood Hazard Areas (places called V and A-Zones by the Federal Emergency Management Agency) are required to conform to state and local requirements. Ask your local building official to find out if your property is in these flood hazard areas or visit www.msc.fema.gov. These structures must be elevated to the design flood elevation to minimize future damage.

New structures, or those that are being rebuilt and are located within CRMC jurisdiction, require a CRMC permit. Existing structures that have been physically destroyed 50% or more by coastal storms must meet all current regulations when being rebuilt. In some cases, these structures may not be permitted to be rebuilt if located on undeveloped or moderately developed barriers. Repairs to structures that have been physically damaged less than 50% will need a CRMC Certificate of Maintenance or an Emergency Assent. These permits authorize the owner to repair the structure to pre-existing conditions and dimensions and do not authorize any new improvements.

Storm-damaged septic systems may need to be repaired or replaced, as directed by the DEM or your local building official. An OWTS permit is issued by DEM. If you are within the coastal zone jurisdiction, you will need to submit your DEM OWTS permit with the approved plans to the CRMC prior to final issuance of the CRMC permit. Permits for rebuilding along the beach may be required to follow OWTS Repair Guidance in Critical Erosion Areas. www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/permits/isds/pdfs/coastrpr.pdf.

Before you begin any repair or reconstruction you must consult with your local building official.

The Permitting Process Step-by-Step

Your Partners in the Permitting Process

Building Officials
(GREEN shapes on flow chart)

Call: Your municipal building department
Visit: www.ribcc.ri.gov

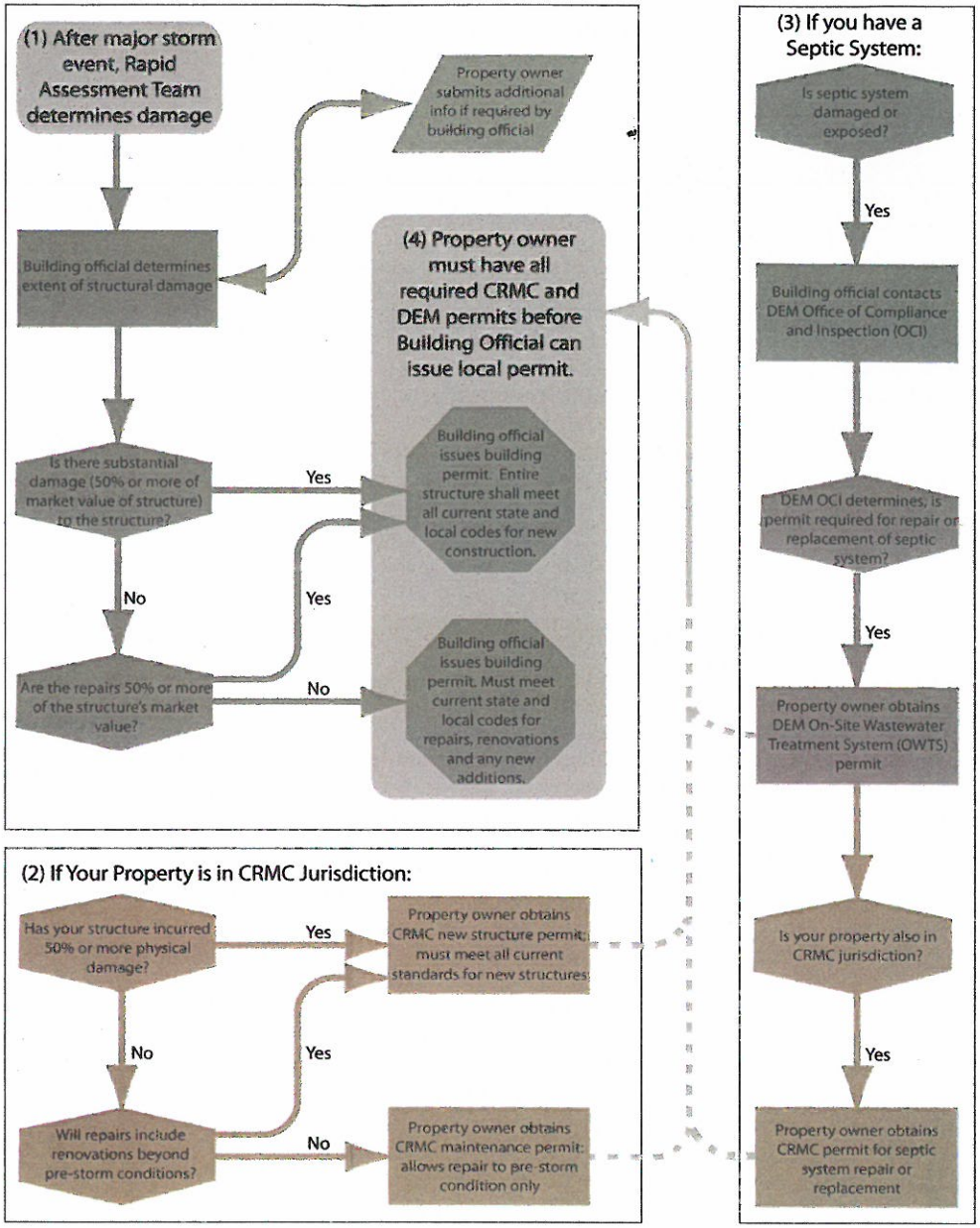
When damage occurs, contact your local building official first so it can be determined whether it's safe to enter the property. The building official will provide specific guidance to help you meet the requirements of the Rhode Island State Building Code and other local regulations. Then, once you obtain state permits from DEM or CRMC (see below), the local building official is responsible for issuing building permits for your repair and rebuilding activities.

Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC)
(TAN shapes on flow chart)

Call: 401.783.3370
Visit: www.crmc.ri.gov

The CRMC is the state agency with jurisdiction of beaches, dunes, barrier islands and spits, coastal wetlands, coastal bluffs and cliffs, rocky shores, man-made features and lands within 200 feet of these shoreline features. If your property falls within this area, CRMC permits are required before you can begin repairs or rebuilding.

Department of Environmental Management (DEM)
(BROWN shapes on flow chart)

Call: 401.222.4700
Visit: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/permits/isds/

The DEM is the state agency responsible for overseeing septic systems (onsite wastewater treatment systems, OWTS). Contact DEM to obtain required permits for any storm-damaged septic system that needs repair or replacement.