



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

BuildSA Training
MEP Questions & Answers
Dec. 16, 2020

The Development Services Department (DSD) hosted a training call for Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) contractors on Dec.16, 2020 to help with the transition to BuildSA. Prior to the training session, the following updates were put into place for customer assistance:

- As of Nov. 30, 2020, we no longer accept email applications through the DSD License email. Permit applications must be submitted online through BuildSA. To create an online account customers need to apply on the new [on-line permitting system](#).
- You can pull your MEP permits in Hansen through Jan.31, 2021 if the residential building permit was issued prior to Nov. 30. Commercial MEP permits will need to be applied and issued in BuildSA.
- For quick reference materials and troubleshooting, visit our [BuildSA training website](#). We have just added the new [Get Started Guide for Permitting](#) and the [MEP Powerpoint Presentation](#).
- For requests related to permits in Hansen, email DSDHansenPermitHelp@sanantonio.gov.
- Customers who need help setting up their on-line account or linking their Professional License, please email BuildSAOCMTeam@sanantonio.gov. For faster service, customers need to include the following:
 - License holder name
 - Contact phone number
 - License number
 - Username ID
 - Email address
 - Company name

Due to the transition, DSD is experiencing high call volumes and email requests. All requests will be responded to on a first come, first served basis. We appreciate your support and patience as we navigate through this together.

Please note the following Questions and Answers (Q&A) came from the training session and meant to be another resource to help guide you through the BuildSA transition. The Q&A are broken into the following sessions: Account Set Up • Linking Professional Licenses • Digital Plan Room • Permits & Records • Inspections • Escrow Accounts • Fees • Resources.

ACCOUNT SET UP

Q. Does BuildSA or someone who works at BuildSA offer a service to setup my account, escrow account, and my delegates

A. If you need assistance with setting up your portal account and linking your license to the portal account, you can email buildsaocmteam@sanantonio.gov. Please provide the following information:

- License holder name
- Contact phone number
- License number
- Username ID (if a portal account is already created)
- License holder E-mail address
- Company Name

Q. Even as a delegate we are unable to pull permits, our LP is listed but it says we cannot pull. We have been pulling permits under a different license and account and then having to add the escrow account in a different name. All delegates currently have access to all that it allow, we are trying to get this figured out.

A. This is one of the biggest changes. In the old system we registered the organization and the licensed professional/license holder was added under the organization. In Accela, the licensed professional/license holder is the registered party. The company for which the license holder masters or is associated with is part of the registration record. The associated company must be added to every permit as a Company Name/Business Owner contact type to pull a permit that requires a license.

A delegate must sign in as the license holder to pull permits and/or schedule inspections. Only the licensed professional/license holder can pull certain permits and/or schedule certain inspection depending on their license.

Additional information is available in this [handout](#).

Q. Can the contact/applicant and a delegate have the same email address?

A. An email can only be used once to create an Online Portal account. A contact, such as a Licensed Professional, Applicant, Authorized Agent, etc. can use the same email address. Please note that a delegate is a permission and they must have their own portal account to be added as a delegate.

Q. How do you turn off the email notifications for the license holder who does not want to receive them?

A. You can submit a request to turn off all emails for the license holder. Please note that this would turn off all emails. To request to turn off emails, please send the name and email address of the user you wish to turn off emails for.

Q. I know this is for MEP, do you know if COSA Fire is changing to the same portal set up?

A. Yes, Fire is also using Accela for license registrations, permits and inspections.

LINKING PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

Q. If there was a parent permit pulled in Hansen back in August and we are just starting to do the work and need to pull our plumbing and mechanical permits we can't go into Hansen and pull it. Is it attached to the parent permit?

A. If your project is commercial, you must apply for the permit in BuildSA. If your project is new residential, then the system will allow you to apply in Hansen through Jan. 31, 2021.

Q. How do we search for an old AP number from Hansen in BuildSA to get a child permit? It is a commercial permit but so far, I cannot find the old AP numbers in the new system?

A. MEP permits were not migrated to BuildSA. You can use the search feature at <https://www.sanantonio.gov/DSD/Online/Search>. You will not find the commercial permit in the new system. You can reference the permit number if you know it in the MEP permit.

Q. When system asks if it is linked to a parent permit, do I put 'no'? Then just reference the old AP number in the notes?

A. That is correct. Answer NO to the question and re-reference the old AP number in the comments please. We are enhancing the BuildSA MEP permit to ask for the Hansen AP number if the building permit was issued before Nov. 30. We will have special coding to not require any type of technical review that may be needed due to the scope of work. This special coding should be done by Dec. 17.

Q. Do the delegates need to register with Accela before they can be delegated?

A. Yes, both users need to have an ACA account before they can add each other as delegates. You may access several helpful documents on how to add your delegates on our [website](#).

DIGITAL PLAN ROOM

Q. How do we upload a document to add to a permit when necessary?

A. To add a document for plan review on an application, prior to issuing a permit, documents are uploaded through the Plan Room on the portal. If you need to upload a document to clear an inspection, it is uploaded as an attachment on the permit record. These go to inspections or the call center to clear an inspection.

PERMITS & RECORDS

Q. To confirm, with the new combination building permits concept we will not need separate permits for gas, general plumbing, sewer etc.?

A. That is correct, no separate gas, general plumbing, sewer or mechanical or electrical permits. All MEP permits will be part of the combination building permit.

Q. Is it going to be up to the contractor to make sure all MEP items are on the permit so that they are there when it is time to request an inspection?

A. The plan reviewers make sure the right inspections will be added to the permits, but most are automatic, unless the plan reviewer changes it.

Q. Why do you get multiple confirmations? We're getting anywhere from 1-6 per permit application and then again when it's in issuance.

A. If you are the same contact on the record, you should only receive one. Customers can also opt out of emails, but it would be all emails.

Q. If the building permit was pulled in the old system do we pull our MEP permit there? It is not showing up in the new system.

A. You can pull your MEP permits in Hansen if the residential building permit was issued prior to Nov. 30, 2020. Commercial MEP permits will need to be applied and issued in BuildSA.

Q. We use to be able to get a permit prior to submitting plans. Are we still able to do that?

A. You can still get a fast track permit, but any fast track will still need the plans prior to pulling the fast track.

Q. Where would we enter pieces of equipment on a mechanical permit application? SEER rating, etc.?

A. There is a question related to the SEER rating in the MEP trade application that you can enter. At the end of the application you will be prompted with a list of items to choose from and provide the quantities.

Q. What is the typical turnaround time from submitting application to receiving an issued permit?

A. Each application has a different turnaround time. Please note that we are experiencing a high volume of requests and turnaround may be longer than expected. Additional resources have been added to assist.

Q. Does this eliminate the double sewer and underground permits required on commercial job sites where BOTH the plumbing company and utility company pulled separate permits?

A. The sewer and underground fees and inspections are set up based on how the application is applied for. There are questions about underground and sewer on both the sitework permit and the building permit. If both permit state that sewer is needed, then there would be two inspections (one on each permit). If the application says sewer is only on sitework and not the building, then the inspection is only on one. The plumbing plan examiner should check to not have duplicates based on the plans.

Q. Will we be notified after a contractor has added us as a contact on a permit?

A. The system currently does not send a notification to the licensed professional. This is something we requested but I am not sure when it will be implemented. At this time, we were telling MEP's that they would need to coordinate with the contractors.

Q. Why are there two statuses in the record log, one says issued and the other says active?

A. The system generates two records from a permit application. The first one is the permit application, and when the reviews are complete and/or fees are paid, the status of the application changes to issued.

The second record generated is the permit record. Once fees are paid and reviews are completed, the system issues the permit record with a status of active.

Q. On electrical permits if we are not the prime on the project, would we need to be added by the general contractor?

A. An electrical permit for existing construction can be pulled by the MEP professional. A general contractor is not required. For a new construction permit, such as residential or commercial, the contractor and or general contractor can add the MEP professionals to the permit. A license holder is required to schedule the trade inspections on a building permit. Communication should be coordinated between both parties when inspections are scheduled as the MEP contractor will receive an email notification. Note that the request to add MEP contractors is submitted as an amendment record and an email notification will be sent to all parties when the request is completed.

Q. Why do we get two different permits, an application and a permit?

A. This is to differentiate the difference between an application and an actual permit. A permit is not issued until plan review and/or fees have been paid. Reviews and fees are primarily paid on the application. Once all necessary approvals are obtained and fees are paid, the system issues the permit number.

Q. Maintenance permit falls under what type of work?

A. Maintenance permits are used for apartment complexes and or business that employ MEP technicians to perform work at their facilities. This is not the same a MEP trade permit.

Q. We have a department that specializes in residential and commercial calls for service? Would this be included in the MEP maintenance permit category?

A. No, the maintenance permit can only be used for a facility that employs full time MEP technicians to work at specified properties.

Q. Are we still going to get an AP number that is given to us from the general contractor?

A. The AP numbers will go away. Accela issues a different number sequence that follows a certain sequence based on the application/permit type and the year the application was submitted. For example, the application starts with this number: MEP-TRD-APP20-3310268 (MEP Trade Application). Once the application is approved, the system issues the permit, and the number changes to include specific trade: MEP-PLM-PMT20-34302681 (General Plumbing Permit).

Q. When I click on my issued plumbing permit, I do not see any possible inspections to schedule, why?

A. The inspections are now part of the Building Permit in BuildSA. The Applicant or the General Contractor will add the MEP contractors the Building Permit using the Add/Remove Amendment. Please see page 104 of the [ACA user guide](#). The contractors can then schedule inspections on-line using the BuildSA site. You will need to be the licensed professional or delegate to schedule an inspection. Please see page 93 of the ACA user guide.

INSPECTIONS

Q. Residential MEP permits (plumbing) no longer need to be pulled by the plumber? The inspections are now part of the builder's permit?

A. Yes, for all new homes permitted in the new system, you would not pull separate plumbing permits. They are paid for and inspections are on the actual building permit.

Q. Did you say the GC can schedule inspections?

A. If you as an electrical contractor needs to schedule an electrical inspection, then you would need to be added to the building permit.

Q. Are we now able to schedule more than three days out?

A. There is no limit on how far out you can schedule an inspection.

Q. The general contractor is only able to schedule foundation. For framing and building type inspections, they are not able to schedule any MEP type inspections.

A. Only the license professional can schedule their associated trade inspections. The general contractor can only schedule the non-MEP inspections.

Q. So once the general contractor adds us, are we then prompted to add our information as far as the line items and what we will be installing on that project?

A. If we, or the system makes a mistake, we or the inspectors can add a missing inspection or add missing items or remove an inspection that is not needed.

Q. We had an issue this past week trying to schedule an inspection in the Hansen portal and it never went through. It was scheduled after we called Development Services. How do get confirmation it was scheduled?

A. You can confirm if the inspection was scheduled by logging into your account.

Q. What is the typical turnaround time on submitting requests and getting a confirmation that the inspections is scheduled? Is it posting immediately?

A. The inspection confirmation is immediate. You will receive an email confirmation when the inspection was successfully scheduled, and you can also verify the inspection is scheduled by looking online.

Q. When inspection is scheduled but inspector couldn't make it to the site that day, is the inspection rolled to next day? Is the contractor notified and when?

A. If the inspection cannot be performed the initial date the inspection was scheduled, the system will automatically reschedule the inspection for the next business day. The system will notify the applicant by email when the inspection could not be performed on the original scheduled date and will be moved to the next business day.

Q. If an inspection is scheduled, will license holder and all delegates receive the inspection email?

A. When an inspection is scheduled, all contacts on the application receive notifications. The delegates will not receive a notification if they are not a contact type in the application/permit.

ESCROW ACCOUNTS

Q. Is an Escrow Account not required unless the property owner chooses to have one.

A. Correct. You are not required to have an escrow account. To help, review our tutorials:

- [How to create an Escrow Account](#)
- [How to pay fees using your Escrow Account](#)
- [Closing an Escrow Account](#)

FEES

Q. I thought I heard at the introduction of this that the fees would be based on building square footage instead of qty of fixtures? Are the fees now based on both? Did I hear wrong?

A. The combination commercial building permit will assess the MEP fees based upon square footage and occupancy (not inspection device). The standalone MEP permit is by inspection items. Residential and commercial MEP fees are based on the square footage of the building, not on the numbers of numbers of items/line items.

RESOURCES

Q. Is there a new user instruction page?

A. We have several resources available on our [BuildSA website](#).

Q. Where can I get the information packet used in the beginning of the presentation?

A. You can find several resources [here](#), including What's Changing with MEP, [Caryn's guide](#); and [presentation](#). We also have a [pre-recorded training](#) session available for viewing.

Q. Is the recorded training session going to be available, so we can go back to review it?

A. Yes, the [recorded session](#) is the same as what was delivered at the meeting.

Q. When are you going to get more people to answer phones when issues come up?

A. We added more staff to the Call Center. However, due to the number of calls to the call center, we are having a hard time keeping up with the calls. Our teams are working hard to provide service to all customers on a first come, first served basis.