



SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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POLICY

Kitchen (Food Preparation Area)

Revised 12/20/2021

David Williams / Community Development Director

Jason Hensel / Chief Building Official

This policy supersedes the original policy dated 7/24/2006 and revised on 6/10/2015.

ISSUE: The San Juan County adopted codes and ordinances do not enumerate specific conditions that create a kitchen (food preparation area). This has caused confusion, misunderstanding, and disagreements regarding the regulatory requirements associated with what constitutes the creation of a dwelling unit.

ANALYSIS: It is generally agreed that the permanent installation of a cooking appliance constitutes the creation of a kitchen. However, a kitchen is simply defined as “. . . an area used, or designed to be used, for the preparation of food;” per Section R202 of the IRC; or “. . . a room used for cooking or preparing food;” per Section 18.20.110 of the SJCC. Neither of these definitions limits a kitchen to an area which contains a permanently installed cooking appliance. Additionally, the National Electrical code has specific requirements for location of outlets associated with kitchen counters.

POLICY: The following policy shall apply in the determination and classification of a kitchen (food preparation area).

A kitchen exists where:

1. A single (or more) permanently installed cooking appliance (such as a range, oven, built in microwave or cook top, etc.) is installed or designed to be installed. Installation of dedicated 220 volt or 110-volt electrical circuits or fuel gas piping conducive to the location necessary for these appliances shall indicate an intent for installation of cooking appliances, whether accompanying cooking appliances are installed or not, and

2. The cooking appliance(s) is in an area not designed as a laundry room, toilet room, bathing room, bedroom and/or utility room, etc. and the area contains a sink and a counter that are installed, or which are designed to be installed as indicated by the design or placement of electrical outlets.

A kitchen does not exist based on the presence of a refrigerator, dishwasher, or sink. A countertop with sink is allowed when electrical outlets are restricted to 8' on center with one under counter outlet for a garbage disposal. Use of dedicated 220v circuit or LPG connections are prohibited within 10' of cabinets/counters, to prevent the conversion to a kitchen after the fact.

Additionally, food cooking appliances installed on the exterior of the home (i.e., patio or deck), or in a non-conditioned garage for the purposes of hobby canning or similar activities, shall not be considered a kitchen by this definition, however, may be subject to permitting requirements.

The San Juan County adopted codes and ordinances shall be adhered too, and this memo shall not be construed to waive any adopted requirements.

This revised policy shall supersede all other previous policies relative to this issue, shall take effect on January 1, 2022, and shall apply to all permit application submittals (or to revisions submitted to previously submitted permits and/or approved permits) submitted on or after this date.

Where special conditions exist, the Director or Chief Building Official may approve modifications to this policy on an individual case by case basis.