



{Chapter Nine

WHAT THE LAWS SAY}

All municipalities are different with respect to the laws about construction along the bluff. Some require permits for buildings, sheds, stairs, etc. and some don't. Contact the township zoning administrator for information that applies to your property. See Appendix A for contact information.

As a general rule, two permits are required for construction along the Lake Erie shoreline in Pennsylvania; a township zoning permit, and a Uniform Construction Code (UCC) building permit. The township zoning permit and UCC building permit work together to ensure sustainable development along the Lake Erie bluff and Erie County waterways.

Township zoning permit: This specifies that the structure in its proposed location is in compliance with the township's setback requirements, etc. This takes into consideration things such as setbacks for side yards, roads, rights of way, utilities, height of building, distance from bluff crest, etc. In this process, the township zoning officer meets the property owner on site and can issue a permit. A township variance may be necessary to build or expand a structure. The township zoning officer (see Appendix A) can explain the current regulations and processes.

Building permit thru the UCC: The UCC was passed in 1999 and took effect in 2004. All residents must conform to UCC requirements. Some townships provide UCC inspections as a service to property owners; others do not. Property owners that reside in townships that do not provide this service must find an independent building inspector. Check with your township to see if they have a list of contractors to share with property owners. The UCC inspection is ongoing until the project is complete. Inspectors may return several times to check things such as type of block used in the basement, placement of stairs and fences along the bluff, etc.

The chart below lists bluff front setbacks (in feet) for residential, commercial and industrial development along the Pennsylvania stretch of the Lake Erie shoreline by township. These setbacks are correct as of June, 2007, but please note that they may be revised as new bluff recession hazard areas are identified. In particular, no setbacks are required for the City of Erie as of June, 2007, but they are currently being considered.

These setbacks are enforced by township officials and are the distances required for building permits along the lakeshore.

In some cases, there may be municipal setback regulations from stream banks and wetlands. Some townships have their own local zoning regulations, but be aware that state guidelines supersede township regulations. The best source of information for regulations along streams and wetlands is the Erie County Conservation District Resource Conservationist or the Department of Environmental Protection (see *contact information in Appendix A*).

Municipality	Residential	Commercial	Industrial
Springfield Township	100	150	200
Girard Township	200	200	200
Lake City Borough	150	150	150
Fairview Township	100	100	100
Millcreek Township	50	75	100
City of Erie	Currently being considered.		
Lawrence Park Township	50	75	100
Harborcreek Township	50	75	100
North East Township	50	75	100

TABLE 4 Setback distances (in feet) as established by municipal ordinance. These setbacks apply to any construction requiring permits along the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Bluff.