

# **RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS SURVEY DOCUMENTATION**

## **PLACE ASCII Files**

### **Place Level Residential Building Permit Statistics**

#### Introduction

This file provides building permit statistics on new privately-owned residential construction. They are provided for individual permit-issuing jurisdictions.

#### File Formats

##### **A. File Names**

1. Monthly Data - Three monthly files are available for each of the 4 Census regions (NE, MW, SO, WE), current month data, year-to-date data, and monthly cumulative data. These are defined as follows:

- a. Current month - data tabulated for only that survey period.

File Name - <Region><YYMM>C.txt, where "Region" is the 2-character abbreviation shown above and "YYMM" is the survey date; i.e. 0712.  
Example is SO0712C.txt.

- b. Year-to-Date monthly - summed data from the beginning of the year through the current survey month including late reports and corrections for prior months.

File Name - <Region><YYMM>Y.txt, where "Region" is the 2-character abbreviation shown above and "YYMM" is the survey date; i.e. 0712.  
Example is SO0712Y.txt.

- c. Monthly Cumulative - monthly data records for each permit office from the beginning of the year through the current survey month including late reports and corrected data for prior months.

File Name - <Region><YYMM>R.txt, where "Region" is the 2-character abbreviation shown above and "YYMM" is the survey date; i.e. 0712.  
Example is SO0712R.txt.

2. Annual Data - Data tabulated for that survey year for each of four Census regions (NE, MW, SO, WE):
  - a. Annual summary data - Annual data records for all permit offices.  
  
File Name - <Region><YYYY>A.txt, where "Region" is the 2-character abbreviation shown above and "YYYY" is the year. Example is SO2006A.txt.
  - b. Annual revised data - Monthly data records for all monthly reporting permit offices showing final data for each month of the year.  
  
File Name - <Region><YYYY>R.txt, where "Region" is the 2-character abbreviation shown above and "YYYY" is the year. Example is SO2006R.txt.
- B. Current month files and monthly cumulative files are ASCII, comma delimited files, providing:
  1. Survey date, in the form "YYYYMM" (annual files show a date of "YYYY99").
  2. Two-digit FIPS state code.
  3. Six-digit Building Permit Survey ID code (to sort places alphabetically in a state).
  4. Three-digit FIPS county code.
  5. Four-digit Census Place code.
  6. Five-digit FIPS Place code.
  7. Five-digit FIPS Minor Civil Division (MCD) code.
  8. 2000 Population.
  9. Three-digit CSA code or "999", if not in a CSA.
  10. Five-digit CBSA code or "99999", if not a CBSA.
  11. Footnote code:

Blank Place has no explanatory footnote  
2 Place has an explanatory footnote

12. Central City code:

Blank Place is not a central city of a metropolitan area  
1 Place is a central city of a metropolitan area

13. Zip Code where permit office/official is located.

14. One-digit Census region code:

1 Northeast  
2 Midwest  
3 South  
4 West

15. One-digit Census division code:

1 New England  
2 Middle Atlantic  
3 East North Central  
4 West North Central  
5 South Atlantic  
6 East South Central  
7 West South Central  
8 Mountain  
9 Pacific

16. Source code identifying source of data as shown:

1 Building Permits C-404 survey form  
2 Received data in electronic format  
3 Received data through internet reporting  
4 Received residential data from Survey of Construction  
5 No report received, imputed data  
9 No report received and no imputed data

17. Alpha place name.

18-29. Buildings, units and valuation permit data (estimates with imputation).

See Attachment A for a complete record layout.

C. Year-to-date and annual files are ASCII, comma delimited files, providing:

1. Survey date (Format: YYYYMM; annual files show a date of "YYYY99").
2. Two-digit FIPS state code.
3. Six-digit Building Permit Survey ID code (to sort places alphabetically in a state).
4. Three-digit FIPS county code.
5. Four-digit Census Place code.
6. Five-digit FIPS Place code.
7. Five-digit FIPS Minor Civil Division code.
8. 2000 Population.
9. Three-digit CSA code or "999", if not in a CSA.
10. Five-digit CBSA code or "99999", if not a CBSA.
11. Footnote code:  
  
Blank Place has no explanatory footnote  
2 Place has an explanatory footnote
12. Central City code:  
  
Blank Place is not a central city of a metropolitan area  
1 Place is a central city of a metropolitan area
13. Zip Code where permit office/official is located.

14. One-digit Census region code:

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1 | Northeast |
| 2 | Midwest   |
| 3 | South     |
| 4 | West      |

15. One-digit Census division code:

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | New England        |
| 2 | Middle Atlantic    |
| 3 | East North Central |
| 4 | West North Central |
| 5 | South Atlantic     |
| 6 | East South Central |
| 7 | West South Central |
| 8 | Mountain           |
| 9 | Pacific            |

16. Number of months of reported residential data.

17. Alpha place name.

18-29. Buildings, units and valuation permit data (estimates with imputation).

30-41. Buildings, units and valuation permit data (reported only).

Note: Two sets of data are shown for each type of construction:

1. Estimates with Imputation - includes reported data for monthly respondents and imputed data for nonrespondents.
2. Reported Only - includes only reported data for respondents.

See Attachment B for a complete record layout.

D. Historic files have various footnotes appended to some permit office names as follows:

(N) - Permit-issuing places identified since the 20,000-place universe was established in

2004 (selection actually took place in August 2003); activity for these places is not included in summary statistics.

# - See explanatory footnote.

@1 - The State of Montana, Department of Commerce, Building Codes Bureau issues the building permits for residential buildings with 5 units or more and all nonresidential buildings. Permits are not required for residential buildings with 1 to 4 units.

@2 - Permits are issued by both the State of Montana, Department of Commerce, Building Codes Bureau and the local jurisdiction. These data are based on permits issued by the local jurisdiction and include residential building with 1 to 4 units.

@3 - Permit system called "County Part" covers residential construction of four or more family buildings and commercial construction for the entire county. Permits for places listed separately only cover the construction of one, two and three family buildings.

@4 - Permit system covers the construction of one, two and three family buildings.

@5 - Permit system only covers the construction of one and two family buildings.

### Importing Files into Microsoft Excel

1. Open Microsoft Excel
2. Select **Open**
3. Next to "Files of Type", select **Text Files**
4. Select the file you want to open and click **Open**
5. Under "Original data type", select **Delimited**, click **Next**
6. Choose **Comma** as the type of Delimiter, click **Next**
7. In the "Data preview" window, select all columns in the spreadsheet by scrolling right to the last column, hold the down the Shift key, select the last column, and let go of the Shift key. Choose **Text** as the "Column data format".
8. Click **Finish**
9. The spreadsheet is now displayed; adjust column widths accordingly.

### Source of Data

Statistics provided in these files are based upon reports submitted by local building permit officials in response to a mail and/or online survey. If an official fails to respond and the permit-issuing place is in our Residential Permit Use Survey (SUP), then the residential housing unit data are

obtained from that survey. The SUP (a component of the Survey of Construction) is a survey in which interviewers go to approximately 900 selected permit offices and list data from each building permit that authorizes construction of new residential housekeeping buildings. If no report is received and the place is not in SUP, then all data items are imputed.

### Geographic Coverage of Building Permit Jurisdiction

Most of the permit-issuing jurisdictions are municipalities; the remainder are counties, townships, or unincorporated towns. For the municipalities, and townships or towns, the area subject to building permit requirements to which the figures pertain is normally that of the governmental jurisdictions. A small number of municipalities have authority to issue building or zoning permits for areas extending beyond their corporate limits. In such cases, the data relate to the entire area within which the permit-issuing authority is exercised. Similarly, a small number of townships issue permits for only a part of the township and the data normally covers only the area subject to the township's permit system.

### Limitations of Data

The portion of construction measurable from building permit records is inherently limited since such records obviously do not reflect construction activity outside of the area subject to local permit requirements. For the nation as a whole, less than 2 percent of all privately owned housing units built are construction in areas that do not require building permits.

The reported statistics are also influenced by the following factors:

1. Some building permit jurisdictions close their books a few days before the end of the month/year, so that the time reference for permits is not, in all cases, strictly the calendar month/year.
2. A study spanning 4 years showed that about 3 percent of the single-family houses built in permit-issuing places are built without a permit.

To the extent that most of these limiting factors apply rather consistently over an extended period, they may not seriously impair the usefulness of building permit statistics as prompt indicators of trends in residential construction activity.

Questions should be directed to U.S. Census Bureau, Manufacturing and Construction Division,  
Washington, D.C. 20233-6900. Phone: (301) 763-5160.

Attachment A

**Record Layout of Building Permits Place Level  
ASCII Customer Data File - Current Month & Monthly Cumulative**

Field Description

1	Survey Date (Format:YYYYMM; annual files show a date of "YYYY99")
2	Two-digit FIPS state code
3	Six-digit Building Permit Survey ID code
4	Three-digit FIPS county code
5	Four-digit Census Place code
6	Five-digit FIPS place code
7	Five-digit FIPS MCD code.
8	2000 Population
9	Three-digit CSA code
10	Five-digit CBSA code
11	Footnote code
12	Central City
13	Zip Code
14	Census Region code
15	Census Division code
16	Source code
17	Place Name

Reported and Imputed Data

18	101-Buildings
19	101-Units
20	101-Valuation
21	103-Buildings
22	103-Units
23	103-Valuation
24	104-Buildings
25	104-Units
26	104-Valuation
27	105-Buildings
28	105-Units
29	105-Valuation

Attachment B

**Record Layout of Building Permits Place Level  
ASCII Customer Data File - Year-to-Date and Annual**

**Field    Description**

1	Survey Date (Format:YYYYMM; annual files show a date of "YYYY99")
2	Two-digit FIPS state code
3	Six-digit ID code
4	Three-digit FIPS county code
5	Four-digit Census Place code
6	Five-digit FIPS place code
7	Five-digit MCD code
8	2000 Population
9	Three-digit CSA code
10	Five-digit CBSA code
11	Footnote code
12	Central City
13	Zip Code
14	Census Region code
15	Census Division code
16	Number of Months Reported - Res
17	Place Name

**Reported and Imputed Data**

18	101-Buildings
19	101-Units
20	101-Valuation
21	103-Buildings
22	103-Units
23	103-Valuation
24	104-Buildings
25	104-Units
26	104-Valuation
27	105-Buildings
28	105-Units
29	105-Valuation

**Reported Only Data**

30	101-Buildings
31	101-Units
32	101-Valuation
33	103-Buildings
34	103-Units
35	103-Valuation
36	104-Buildings
37	104-Units
38	104-Valuation
39	105-Buildings
40	105-Units
41	105-Valuation