VANCOUVER HVAC PRO

Permits, Codes & Safety

Gas and electrical permits for HVAC work, inspections, carbon monoxide alarms, venting rules and safe operation in Metro Vancouver

4 Expert Answers from HVAC IQ

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Q1

A gas appliance smells like exhaust in my Abbotsford home, is that dangerous?

Yes, exhaust smell from a gas appliance is a serious warning sign and you should treat it as a potential carbon monoxide (CO) hazard until proven otherwise.

What to Do Right Now

If the smell is strong, you notice symptoms like headache, dizziness or nausea, or a CO alarm has sounded, leave the building immediately and call emergency services from outside. Do not go back in to open windows or turn anything off.

If the smell is faint and intermittent and no one feels unwell, you can ventilate the space and shut the appliance off at its switch or thermostat, but still get it inspected before running it again. A CO alarm on every level of the home, and within 5 metres of each bedroom door, is strongly recommended for any home with a fuel-burning appliance.

Exhaust odour almost always means combustion gases are escaping into the living space instead of venting outside. Common causes include a cracked heat exchanger in a furnace, a blocked or deteriorating flue, a backdrafting chimney, a failed draft inducer, or a shared vent that is undersized after one appliance was removed or upgraded. Older Abbotsford homes with a gas furnace and a gas water heater sharing a single masonry chimney are particularly prone to backdrafting, especially after a high-efficiency furnace was added and the original chimney became too large for the remaining appliance.

Abbotsford sits outside Metro Vancouver, so it falls under the Fraser Valley Regional District and Technical Safety BC handles both gas permits and inspections for residential work there. Any contractor doing the diagnostic or repair work must be employed by a gas contractor licensed with Technical Safety BC. You can search the licence registry on the Technical Safety BC website to confirm before anyone touches the appliance.

A proper inspection should include a combustion analysis, a heat exchanger check (often with a camera), a flue pressure and draft test, and a CO reading at the registers and near the appliance. The technician should also check whether the venting configuration still meets current requirements, particularly if any appliances have been changed since the home was built.

Repair costs vary depending on what is found: a service call and diagnostic typically runs $120 to $250, a flue repair or reline can run considerably more, and a cracked heat exchanger usually means furnace replacement, which in Metro Vancouver and the surrounding region runs $5,500 to $11,000 for a high-efficiency gas unit installed.

Do not run the appliance again until a licensed gas contractor has cleared it in writing. Ask for a written report naming the fault found, the repair completed, and confirmation that combustion and venting tested within safe limits

after the work. Once you have that, Vancouver HVAC Pro can match you with local HVAC contractors for free if you need quotes for the repair or a replacement system.

Q2

Can an unpermitted furnace cause problems when selling a Kitsilano home?

Unpermitted work on a gas furnace in Kitsilano can absolutely surface during a real estate transaction, and it tends to surface at the worst possible moment: during a buyer's home inspection or when a lender's insurer reviews the property file.

Why the Permit Gap Matters at Sale Time

The City of Vancouver issues its own gas permits and its own electrical permits for residential work. When a furnace was installed or replaced without pulling those permits, there is no inspection record on file with the City. A sharp home inspector will flag the absence, and a buyer's lawyer or mortgage insurer may require the work to be brought into compliance before closing. In a competitive Kitsilano market that can mean a price reduction, a delayed closing or a collapsed deal.

The practical risk goes beyond the sale. If the furnace was installed without a gas permit, no City inspector ever confirmed that the venting, gas line sizing, combustion air supply or CO alarm placement met code. A high-efficiency condensing furnace on an old shared chimney, or a unit vented incorrectly through a tight Kitsilano house, is a genuine carbon monoxide hazard. **The City of Vancouver Fire By-law requires a CO alarm inside each bedroom or within five metres of each bedroom door in any home with a fuel-burning appliance.** An inspector will check for those too.

There is also an insurance angle. Some home insurers in BC will deny a claim related to a fire or CO incident if unpermitted gas work is found to be a contributing factor.

Getting it regularised before listing is the cleaner path. A licensed gas contractor can assess whether the existing installation meets current City of Vancouver requirements. If it does, they can apply for a retroactive permit and arrange an inspection; if it does not, they will quote the remediation. Retroactive permits are not guaranteed, and the City may require corrections before it signs off. Typical high-efficiency gas furnace replacement or remediation work in Metro Vancouver runs $5,500 to $11,000 depending on scope, though a straightforward permit-and-inspect on a compliant installation costs far less.

A proper quote for any remediation should include the gas permit fee, the electrical permit fee if the circuit was also unpermitted, any required venting changes, CO alarm verification and removal of the old equipment if it is still on

site. Ask the contractor for their Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence number, confirm WorkSafeBC coverage, and check that both the gas and electrical permits are in the quoted price before signing anything.

Before the contractor visits, have the following ready: the approximate age and model of the furnace (check the data plate on the unit), any paperwork from the original installation, the address of the property and whether there is a secondary suite (a suite changes the CO alarm requirements and may affect the permit scope), and a note of where the gas meter and electrical panel are located. That information lets the contractor assess the job accurately in a single visit rather than coming back for measurements.

Sorting this out before the listing goes live is far easier than during a deal, and a local contractor who knows City of Vancouver permits is one request away through Vancouver HVAC Pro.

Q3

Where can I check whether a gas fitter may pull permits in British Columbia?

Technical Safety BC's online licence search is the place to start. Go to the Technical Safety BC website and use the public licence lookup to confirm that the gas contractor holds a valid gas contractor licence and that the gas fitter doing the work is listed under that contractor's licence.

What the search tells you

A gas contractor licence is issued to the company, not the individual. The gas fitter who shows up on site must be employed by a licensed gas contractor and hold their own gas fitter certification. The lookup will show the licence class, the licence number and whether it is currently active. A Class B licence covers most residential work; a Class A covers larger commercial and industrial jobs. If either the company licence or the individual certification is expired or missing, that is a reason to pause before signing anything.

Permit authority matters too. Who issues the gas permit depends on where the property sits. In Metro Vancouver, six municipalities issue their own gas permits for most residential work: the City of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, Maple Ridge, the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver. Everywhere else in the region, including Surrey, West Vancouver, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, New Westminster, Delta, both Langleys, White Rock, Pitt Meadows and the smaller communities, the gas permit comes from Technical Safety BC. A qualified contractor will know which authority to apply to for your address, and will normally pull the permit as part of the job.

For electrical work on the same job, the permit authority is a separate list and differs from the gas list, so confirm both paths with the contractor if a heat pump or new circuit is involved.

Beyond the licence lookup, it is worth confirming two more things before work begins: that the contractor carries WorkSafeBC coverage (you can verify that on the WorkSafeBC website) and that they hold adequate liability insurance. Annual servicing of gas appliances is recommended by Technical Safety BC to keep equipment running safely, though it is not a legal requirement.

Ask the contractor to put the Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence number, their WorkSafeBC account number and the permit number (once pulled) in writing before work starts. If you need a local gas contractor to compare quotes against, Vancouver HVAC Pro can match you with Metro Vancouver contractors at no cost.

Q4

Are HVAC permit fees usually included in a Metro Vancouver contractor's quote?

Most Metro Vancouver HVAC contractors include permit fees in their quoted price, but it is worth confirming explicitly before you sign anything, because practice varies and the fees themselves range from modest to several hundred dollars depending on the municipality and the type of work.

For a straightforward gas furnace replacement, the permit fee is typically small enough that most contractors roll it into the total without itemising it. For a heat pump installation in the City of Vancouver, the mechanical permit alone runs $432 plus $15.30 per kilowatt of installed capacity for a one to three storey building, so on a 10 kW system that is roughly $585 in permit fees before any electrical permit is added. That is a real line item, and a detailed quote should show it separately so you know what you are paying for equipment, labour and permits respectively.

What the permit path looks like for common jobs

The contractor pulls the permits, not you, and the cost is normally bundled into the project price. For a heat pump, there are usually two permits involved: an electrical permit for the new circuit and disconnect, and in the City of Vancouver a mechanical permit as well. If the job also removes a gas furnace, a gas permit is needed to cap the line, even if no new gas appliance is going in.

Who issues those permits depends on where you live. For electrical permits, the City of Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, the City and District of North Vancouver, West Vancouver and Maple Ridge each issue their own; everywhere else in Metro Vancouver, including Richmond, the electrical permit comes from Technical Safety BC. For gas permits, the City of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, Maple Ridge, and the City and District of North Vancouver issue their own; everywhere else, including Surrey and West Vancouver, the gas permit comes from Technical Safety BC. The contractor working in your municipality will know which office to deal with, but it is worth asking them to confirm the permit path and include all fees in the written quote.

What a complete quote should show: the equipment make, model and capacity; labour; electrical work (circuit, disconnect, any panel upgrade needed); line set, pad and refrigerant; removal and disposal of the old unit; all permit fees; and the warranty on both parts and labour. If a quote is suspiciously low, permits and electrical work are the first things to check for omissions.

Before hiring, ask the contractor to confirm their Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence number for any gas work, their refrigerant certification for heat pump or AC work, and their WorkSafeBC coverage. Permits should be in the price; licences and coverage are non-negotiable regardless.

Once you have two or three quotes, line up the permit lines side by side; Vancouver HVAC Pro can send your request to local contractors so you have quotes to compare.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver HVAC Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local permit authority (your municipality or Technical Safety BC) before starting any heating, cooling or gas project. Information is current as of November 8, 2026 and may change. Visit **vancouverhvacpro.com** for the latest answers.