



SHORT TERM RENTAL REGISTRY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Short Term Rental (STR) requirements are found in Lewis County Code Chapter 17.105
<https://ecode360.com/48905722>.

Q1: When can I register my STR?

A1: You can apply for the STR permit through SmartGov, accessed through the county webpage
<https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/>. You will need to create a SmartGov account in order to apply.

Q2: What if I don't have my building permit number or a certification of occupancy?

A2: If your building was permitted through Lewis County, you may provide the site address or parcel number to the Lewis County Permit Center and they will provide the building permit number and/or certificate of occupancy. Older buildings that predate permitting (December 30, 1974) can opt for a life/safety inspection by a qualified professional. Lewis County offers life/safety inspections for \$100, apply online. Please note, if you built a structure without obtaining necessary permits, the Planner will put the STR permit application on hold while you start the Master Site Review process to obtain permits retroactively. All relevant Lewis County Codes need to be met.

Q3: How is occupancy calculated?

A3: Occupancy is based on standard septic system design capacity of 2 people per bedroom, plus 3 additional people. Therefore, a 3-bedroom STR can have 9 occupants. If the owner can demonstrate that the septic system is designed for more capacity, the occupancy may be determined based on septic system design capacity.

Q4: What if I built a shed and converted it into a STR without knowing I needed permits from Lewis County?

A4: The shed will need to get a retroactive permit for the conversion. If you've applied for the STR permit, the Planner will put the application on hold while you start the Master Site Review process to obtain permits retroactively. All relevant Lewis County Codes need to be met.

Q5: What if I built a detached bedroom without knowing I needed permits from Lewis County?

A5: The detached bedroom will need to get a retroactive permit. If you've applied for the STR registry, the Planner will put the application on hold while you start the Master Site Review process to obtain permits retroactively. All relevant Lewis County Codes need to be met.

Q6: Can I use my RV or Park Model as an STR?

A6: Yes, your RV or Park Model can be used as a STR as long as the RV or Park Model has been placed as a residence and has obtained all necessary permits. If you did not place the RV or Park Model as a residence, then the Planner will put the application on hold while you start the Master Site Review process to obtain permits retroactively. All relevant Lewis County Codes need to be met.

Q7: What if my structure predates current building codes and my windows do not meet egress for bedrooms?

A7: Legal structures that were built before Lewis County adopted building codes (December 30, 1974) are considered "nonconforming development." Those buildings might not meet current standards for window egress in bedrooms. The Lewis County Building Official, or their designee, can make a site-specific determination if the window configuration is likely to allow egress during an emergency and not require window upgrade prior to approval of the Short Term Rental permit. In this situation, a condition of the approval will be that when the owner or property manager replaces the windows, they must be brought up to current code standards. Please note, a third-party building inspector may not make this determination; only the Lewis County Building Official, or their designee, may make this determination regarding window egress in bedrooms.

Q8: Can I rent out 1 camping spot on my property for people to bring their own tent or RV?

A8: Yes. While this is not defined as a STR because it is not a structure, this is allowed similar to a STR. However, if you are renting out two (2) or more camping spots on your property for a tent or RV, then you are required to comply with Chapter 17.144, RV Parks and Campgrounds, LCC.

Q9: What if I have three or more structures being used as STRs on one parcel?

A9: In most cases, any single parcel is allowed no more than 1 primary residence and 1 accessory dwelling unit (ADU), both of which can be provided as STRs. If you want to have more STRs than the residential density allows, you can apply for a permit as a Cabin or Yurt Village. All relevant Lewis County Codes need to be met.

Q10: What if I don't recertify my STR and the permit is revoked?

A10: If the owner/operator does not recertify annually and the STR permit is revoked, then the owner/operator will have to apply for a new STR permit. The intention is to maintain an accurate record of how many STRs are operating in Lewis County. If a property is sold and the next owner decides to use the structure as a vacation home or residence, not a STR, Lewis County would not know unless the STR permit is not recertified. The burden is on the owner, or new owner, to maintain the STR permit if that is their intended use.

Q11: When does enforcement begin?

A11: Current STR owners or operators have until December 31, 2026, after which unpermitted STRs will be subject to Chapter 1.20, Code Enforcement, LCC <https://ecode360.com/48863469#48863469>.