



FLBOA Finger Lakes Building Officials Association, Inc.

An Affiliated Member of the New York State Building Officials Conference

Building Permits

Professionals who are knowledgeable in building and local codes staff your local Building Department. Their focus is the promotion, awareness, and enforcement of fire and life safety codes. These professionals can be an invaluable source of information to assist you through a building project, provide technical information and resources, and can answer zoning related questions.

Code Enforcement Officials are tasked with the enforcement of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code as well as the Code of your local municipality. By assisting contractors, designers and homeowners they ensure that the structures built are SAFE when newly built and for years to come.

Contact your local building department before you start a construction project.

Below you will find answers to many frequently asked questions concerning building permits.

What services does the Building Department provide?

The Building Department professionals review all plans for building permits to ensure compliance with zoning laws and building code requirements. Additionally, they perform periodic inspections during construction to ensure that the work complies with the approved plans and the building code. The staff is available to answer any questions you may have. They may also have standard practice handouts to assist you with your renovation project.

What is a building permit?

A building permit is a document that grants legal permission to start the construction or alteration of a building or other structure in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

Why do I need a building permit?

Permits ensure that construction within our municipality meets with standards set out in the NYS Building Code and the Code of your local municipality. Your home renovation project must meet basic requirements for health, safety and structural soundness. Beyond this, the permit process makes sure that your plans are compliant with other town requirements, such as zoning regulations and historic building designations.

What happens if I don't get a permit?

The property owner may be subject to legal action for failure to obtain a building permit. If you commence a renovation project that requires a building permit without obtaining one, the municipality can issue a "Stop Work" and/or a "Cease and Desist" order, which remains in effect until you obtain a permit. If the work doesn't meet the requirements of the Building Code and/or local codes, you may have to redo the work at your own cost. Work performed without a permit may delay the sale of your property.

Working without a required permit may also affect an insurance claim arising from the renovation. Before any work begins on your home, check with your insurance representative, who can explain exactly what is needed to ensure continuous and adequate coverage, both during and after the renovation.

When do I need a permit?

A building permit is required for any new building, any addition to an existing building, and any alterations to an existing building which effects: the structural design of the building; mechanical; electrical; plumbing systems; and the use of buildings or parts thereof. Below you will find a list of typical residential projects that require a building permit:

- All decks, porches and three season rooms
- Additions, interior structural alterations, finishing a basement or a portion thereof
- fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, chimneys and Gas inserts
- attached or detached garages, sheds
- installation of sanitary, water service and irrigation systems
- structural alterations to windows or doors
- all pools that can hold 24 inches or more of water and hot tubs
- automatic fire alarms
- extensions to the plumbing, heating and electrical systems
- generators
- re-roofing, re-siding

Some repairs may not require a permit. These include flooring and cabinet installation, and replacement of windows and doors (provided the opening is not enlarged).
In brief, work that does not entail changes to structures or systems.

Check with the building department to be sure if your project requires a building permit.

What paperwork do I need to get a permit?

The specific requirements depend on the type of work you are planning. For simple interior projects, a scale floor plan will often be adequate. For larger projects involving additions, decks or major structural renovations, a full set of working drawings and a site survey map may be required. The building department can tell you exactly what's needed.

When is the permit complete?

A final inspection is required when all work has been completed. When it has been determined that the project meets the applicable codes and standards, a Certificate of Compliance or a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued. **You can not use or occupy the space until either certificate has been issued.**

Do I need a contractor?

This depends on the scope of the project and your skill level. You can do the work yourself or hire a contractor. If you decide to hire a contractor, you will need to provide their name when the application is made. The building department will then verify that the contractor has all of the appropriate insurance coverage.

Who should get the permit – homeowner or the contractor?

As the homeowner, you are legally responsible to ensure that a building permit is obtained when required. Your contractor or designer may apply for the permit, but the homeowner should ensure that a permit has been issued prior to any work commencing.

Some things to consider when choosing a contractor. Continued on page 3 of this document.

Some things to consider when choosing a contractor.

- Check for the contractor's experience in the type of construction proposed.
- Interview the contractor and check his references.
- Check the reliability of your chosen contractor with the Better Contractors Bureau and the Better Business Bureau.
- Arrange a contract and ensure the contract covers all the work including who prepares drawings and who arranges for inspections
- Before signing the contract, check the drawings to ensure they comply with your desires and needs. Also check specifications and materials proposed.
- Confirm the type of warranty that is being given, and, on a large contract, you may wish to obtain legal counsel before signing.
- Confirm whether the contractor is obtaining the building permit or if you are expected to handle the building permit. When the contractor is applying for the permit, make sure you see the permit card before allowing work to start.
- **It is recommended that you make final payment only after a final inspection has been completed by the building department and a Certificate of Compliance or a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued.**