

# Check First! Many Home Improvement Projects Require a Building Permit

Contact: Maura Campbell (517) 373-9280  
Agency: Energy, Labor & Economic Growth

Planning on doing some home improvement projects? Before tearing down walls or running electrical wire, **check with your local or state building department** to learn if your project requires a building permit. A building permit provides the legal permission to start construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.

A building permit is usually required for:

- New buildings
- Additions (bedrooms, bathrooms, family rooms, etc.)
- Residential work (decks, garages, fences, fireplaces, pools, water heaters, etc.)
- Renovations (garage conversions, basement furnishings, kitchen expansions, re-roofing, etc.)
- Electrical systems
- Plumbing systems
- HVAC (heating, ventilating and air-conditioning) systems

“Lately television programs geared toward home improvement and renovations have inspired many homeowners to tackle their own projects,” said Henry L. Green, Director of the Bureau of Construction Codes and Fire Safety. “While the initiative is rewarding, it can also be costly if codes are not followed and inspections not conducted. Checking with the local or state building official ahead of time can reduce the chance of having to do costly repairs to bring the work into compliance.”

A building permit ensures that the proposed construction meets minimum safety standards and allows code officials to protect the public by reducing potential hazards of unsafe construction. Property insurers may not cover work done without permits and inspections, the value of the property could be reduced and problems may arise when the property is sold.

By answering some basic questions (What are you planning to do? Where?), a code official will be able to provide the information needed for compliance with the Michigan Building and Residential Codes and an application for a building permit.

After documenting the "Who, What, When, Where and How" of the job, along with providing any sketches or plans of the proposed work a permit may be issued. Separate permits are required for electrical, plumbing, and heating or air-conditioning work. A code official will review the application for compliance with local and state requirements. If the plan meets the requirements, a permit is issued. If not, the code official will request necessary corrections.

A permit fee is collected to cover the cost of the application, the review and the inspection process. Once the permit is issued, work can begin.

On-site inspections will be required to make certain the work conforms to the permit, codes and plans. More than one inspection is typically required on a project.

Finally, the code official will provide documentation when construction is complete and code compliance is determined.