



Licenses and Residential Permits

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Who is responsible for obtaining a permit to do home improvement projects?

Maryland State law requires home improvement contractors to be licensed by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission (MHIC). Contractors are required to obtain all the necessary permits in advance of starting construction projects. A list of all MHIC licensed contractors can be found by visiting the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation at www.dllr.state.md.us.

If a homeowner applies for a permit(s), then the homeowner assumes responsibility for the work being in compliance with all applicable codes.

BUILDING PERMITS

General Requirements

- A permit is required for all interior and exterior structural alterations or repairs, and some interior non-structural modifications.
- A permit is not required for ordinary repairs and replacements that are non-structural.

Homeowners and contractors are advised to contact the Rockville Inspection Services Division in advance to verify which projects require permits. The information below is intended to serve only as a guide.

Does the City require an approval letter from a condominium or homeowners association?

The City does not require an approval letter from all of the condominium or homeowners associations in Rockville. Projects in King Farm and Falls Grove that involve exterior modifications, such as new fences, decks, and additions will require a letter of approval from the condominium or homeowner's association be provided at the time of permit submittal. All property owners are advised to check with their condominium or homeowners association to see if their approval is required.

What types of exterior projects require a permit?

Permits are required for exterior projects, including but not limited to new additions, swimming pools, fences, sheds, decks, bay windows, screened porches/stoops, and hot tubs. All exterior construction projects that require the issuance of a building permit must also meet certain zoning requirements related to height and setback distance.

What types of interior projects require a building permit?

Permits are required for interior projects including, but not limited to, new interior walls, removal of interior structural bearing walls, finished basements, finished attics, and new bathrooms.

CAUTION: Condominium units are required by the building and fire codes to be separated from adjacent units by walls and ceilings that have a fire resistance rating. **Do not remove drywall or plaster from these walls and ceilings.** Fire resistance rated walls and ceilings are provided to prevent the spread of fire from one unit to another. Creating openings in these assemblies is a code violation.

Does a home improvement contractor need to be licensed to perform work in Rockville?

In general, the answer is “yes.” The City requires a copy of the contractor's MHIC license at the time of permit submittal. All licenses are subject to verification by the State. Homeowners should be wary if a contractor prefers not to obtain a permit(s). This can be an indication that the person does not hold the required license.

The following licensing requirements apply to residential projects within the City of Rockville:

- Home improvement contractors are required to provide their State license number on the permit application, in addition to a copy of their State license
- Electricians are required to be licensed by the City
- Mechanical contractors are required to provide their State HVACR license number
- Plumbers and gas fitters are required to be licensed by the City
- Propane contractors are required to be licensed by the State and proof of licensing must be provided to the City

Below is a list of frequently asked questions that pertain to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work in residential structures.

MECHANICAL PERMITS

Is a permit required to install a heat pump or air-conditioning unit?

A mechanical permit is required to erect, install, enlarge alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace a mechanical heating, ventilating and air-conditioning system or equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, furnaces, heat pumps, and ductwork. Homeowners cannot obtain permits associated with natural gas or propane gas. A licensed HVACR contractor is required to charge and recapture refrigerant from an HVACR system. A licensed Master Plumber or Gasfitter must perform all gas work.

Homeowners desiring to do their own mechanical work must provide proof that they reside in the home. Owners of multiple properties cannot obtain permits for homes that are not their primary residence. Persons renting a home cannot obtain permits for work in the rental property.

NOTICE: Homeowners cannot obtain permits for:

- the replacement or installation of natural gas or propane gas equipment, appliances, piping, or services

All work allowed under a homeowner permit must be completed by the homeowner. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in legal action against the homeowner. All mechanical work performed by a licensed Maryland State licensed HVACR contractor must be performed by the company that the permit is issued to. HVACR contractors are prohibited by the City code from obtaining a permit for another company or individual. HVACR contractors who obtain permits for persons who do not hold Maryland State HVACR license may face disciplinary action by the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR).

ELECTRICAL PERMITS

Is a permit required to install a new outlet, ceiling fan, or lighting fixture?

An electrical permit must be obtained prior to commencement of any electrical work. Homeowners cannot obtain permits for work associated with the replacement or installation of service distribution panels, swimming pools, and hot tubs. City licensed Master Electricians are required to secure permits for these projects.

Homeowners desiring to do their own electrical work must provide proof that they reside in the home. Owners of multiple properties cannot obtain permits for homes that are not their primary residence. Persons renting a home cannot obtain permits for work in the rental property. Homeowners desiring to obtain an electrical permit must first pass a written examination administered by the Inspection Services Division.

NOTICE: Homeowners cannot obtain permits for the installation or replacement of:

- swimming pools, saunas, or hot tubs (excluding cord and plug units)
- service equipment installation such as heavy-ups, panel replacements, and sub-panels
- replacement of SEC cable
- overhead service mast replacements

All work allowed under a homeowner permit must be completed by the homeowner. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in legal action against the homeowner. All electrical work performed by a licensed Master Electrician must be performed by the company that the permit is issued to. Electrical companies are prohibited by the City code from obtaining a permit for another company or individual. Electricians who obtain permits for persons who do not hold a City license will face legal action and suspension or revocation of their master's license.

PLUMBING PERMITS

Is a permit required to install a new sink, toilet, bathtub, or hot water heater?

A plumbing permit must be obtained prior to commencement of all new plumbing work and most replacement projects. Replacement of an existing sink or toilet, for example, does not require a permit providing that no modification to the water or sewer connections is made.

Homeowners desiring to do their own plumbing work must provide proof that they reside in the home. Owners of multiple properties cannot obtain permits for homes that are not their primary residence. Persons renting a home cannot obtain permits for work in the rental property.

NOTICE: Homeowners cannot obtain permits for the installation or replacement of:

- water and sewer laterals (main lines serving the home)
- City water meter settings
- gas water heaters

All work allowed under a homeowner permit must be completed by the homeowner. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in legal action against the homeowner. If additional fixtures are added to a residence, the City will require plumbing demand calculations as prescribed in the City plumbing code. The installation of additional fixtures may require the upgrade of the incoming water supply and meter. A licensed Master Plumber or design professional must perform all plumbing calculations. Calculations using criteria established by WSSC will not be accepted. All plumbing work performed by a licensed Master Plumber must be performed by the company that the permit is issued to. Plumbing companies are prohibited by the City code from obtaining a permit for another company or individual.

Is a permit required to do *emergency* plumbing work?

A licensed Master Plumber may undertake emergency work to rectify an immediate health or hazardous condition without obtaining prior approval. However, the City must be notified of the situation by faxing a completed application to the Rockville Inspection Services Division at 240-314-8265. The contractor must follow up with a formal permit submittal the following business day. All work requiring permits must not be covered or concealed from the inspector's view.

What happens if work is done without first obtaining the required permit?

The City will immediately assess an investigation fee ranging from \$100 to \$200 for each permit that was not obtained. Further, failure to obtain a permit can result in the issuance of a State of Maryland Uniform Civil Citation with fines up to \$1,000. If the fine is not paid within the timeframe prescribed by law, the City will send the citation to the District Court for prosecution.

The State addresses building codes in the Maryland Building Performance Standards and may modify the International Building Code and the International Residential Code to coincide with other Maryland laws. All jurisdictions in Maryland refer to these documents, however each jurisdiction may amend these codes to suit local conditions.

Additional information can be found by visiting the Maryland Codes Administration web link on the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development web site at www.dhcd.state.md.us.