Home Improvement Projects
FAQ's About Permit Requirements

The following are some common situations that homeowners often face before starting work on home improvement projects.

1. **"I want to replace the front door or other exterior door of my house. Do I need a permit?"**
   Yes. The building code devotes six pages to doors. The front door on your house is your primary exit in case of fire. The code requires that the locks on all of your exterior doors allow you to escape the house in a panic situation without needing a "key or any special knowledge or effort." During the middle of the night with the house on fire is not the time to be looking for a key.

2. **"Is a permit required to replace the door in the hall closet?"**
   No. There are no code sections regulating safety features of your hall closet doors. The building inspector would have nothing to tell you about that installation.

3. **"Is a permit required to replace the windows in my house?"**
   Yes. The windows in your bedrooms are your fire escape in the event that your house is on fire and you cannot reach your front door. They are also sometimes used by firefighters to pull you to safety. There are specific code requirements regarding the size of the opening and locking mechanisms. There are also requirements for natural light and ventilation that must be met.

4. **"My child just threw a ball through the window. Do I need a permit to replace the glass?"**
   No. The safety issues described above are not affected by the replacement of a pane of glass.

5. **"I want to re-roof my house. Do I need a permit?"**
   Yes. There are code requirements for roofing. The general rule is that only Class A fire rated roofing materials may be used. If your roofing material should fail before the warranty expires and the roof was not installed according to code and manufacturer's specs, the manufacturer may not accept full responsibility for the failure.

6. **"I want to paint my house. Do I need a permit?"**
   No.

7. **"I am going to extend an electrical circuit and add electrical outlets. Do a need a permit?"**
   Yes. Proper wire size and types, proper connections and proper wiring methods are critical for your protection from fire and electrocution. We recommend that you employ a licensed professional for this work if you are not certain of your abilities in this field.

8. **"I need to replace a loose electrical plug receptacle."**
   No permit is required. None of the wiring issues above are affected by this.

9. **"My drains are all plugged. Do I need a permit to have them 'rootered' out?"**
   No.

10. **"I am going to install, replace or extend a gas pipe. Is a permit? Required?"**
    Definitely yes. It is very important to your safety that your gas pipes do not leak and are installed to prevent future leaks. Also, the sizes of your gas piping play a very important part in the efficient operation of your gas appliances and will be checked when you apply for your permit.

11. **"I am going to add or replace a heater/air conditioner or water heater. Do I need a permit?"**
    Yes. There are important electrical, gas piping, pressure relief and seismic issues that must be addressed in the installation of heaters, air conditioners, and water heaters.

12. **"My repairman says I need to replace the exhaust fan in my bathroom ceiling heating unit. Do I need a permit?"**
    No. You are replacing a component of an existing approved system. No permit is required.

13. **Who May Apply For A Building Permit?**
    Property owners, licensed contractors or authorized agents may apply for a building permit. Contractors must provide a Certificate of Workers Compensation Insurance. Property owners doing their own work will be required to sign the Owner-Builder Verification stating that they are actually doing their own work and are exempt from the requirement of having Workers Compensation Insurance; otherwise, they will be required to provide a certificate of insurance.