



## “So what if I don’t get a permit?”

Sometimes owners opt to complete work on or around their building without either checking to see if a permit is required or obtaining the appropriate permits and proper inspections. For some owners this is due to permit costs and for others it’s apprehension of working with the local government.

The City of Watertown Building, Safety and Zoning Department (aka Inspection Department) strives to create a harmonious relationship with owners and their contractors. In this article we will try to touch on items such as what the benefits are for retaining the appropriate permits and inspections, what the consequences are if the proper permits and/or inspections are not completed, when a permit is required, and how much a permit costs.

### **What are the benefits to obtaining the applicable permits and proper inspections?**

By obtaining the appropriate permits and having the proper inspections completed on a project, an owner is ensured that the work is being completed per code standards and verified by appropriate staff. This not only equals a safe environment for anyone in and around the structure but, in the instance of a fire, burst pipe, or collapse the owner will have proof for the insurance company that the permits were pulled and inspections were completed. There are instances where owners are not compensated by the insurance company after a disaster because the cause was traced back to a project which was never inspected by the appropriate staff at the local government agency. Even if permits are pulled, there is no verification of the project being adequately completed without the inspector’s signature.

### **How will anyone find out if I don’t obtain a permit and what happens are the consequences?**

There are many different scenarios which shed a spotlight on properties who have completed or are completing a project without the appropriate permits.

The first instance is one our office sees the most often – an owner trying to sell their property. Many prospective buyers do their homework and check with the local government to ensure the proper permits were pulled and inspections were completed. This information tells prospective buyers that all work was completed up to code standards and that a licensed government official approved the work. Several owners have had to hire licensed contractors after the work was completed during the selling process, have the applicable permits pulled and pay additional fees for completing work without the proper permits. If the appropriate inspections weren’t completed, additional fees apply to have the inspector return to the property after the permit lapsed without the proper renewal and sometimes walls have to be opened for the inspector to ensure the work was done appropriately.

A second example of how the Building, Safety and Zoning Department may be alerted of unpermitted work occurring in the City of Watertown is by the general public confidentially reporting the work to the department. Once advised of this work, the Building, Safety and Zoning Department staff are required by law to investigate. Once our inspectors approach the property in question, they will speak with the owner and/or contractor and ask to see the permit(s). If an owner or contractor is unable to produce the permit, the project is “red-tagged” and shut down and will have to do whatever is necessary to obtain the permit before construction can resume. If anything has been built which does not comply with zoning ordinances or building codes, city officials can order that portion of the work to be demolished. A fine can be levied on the project.

### **When do you need a permit?**

Unless the work is cosmetic (i.e. changing flooring or cabinets, replacing shingles, replacing a window with the same sized window, painting, siding, etc.), it will require a permit. Some of the projects owners may not be aware require permits include placing a shed on your property, building a deck, adding or replacing a porch, remodeling a room, etc. If you are unsure if your project requires a permit, you may reference the City of Watertown’s Building, Safety &

Zoning's list as to what does and does not require permits or you may either call us at (920) 262-4060 or stop in our office Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### **Who pulls the permit?**

It is the owner's responsibility to ensure the proper permits are pulled for the work. If a contractor is hired, ensure that there is clear communication as to which party will be pulling the permits and calling for inspections.

### **What does a permit cost?**

Fee schedules are different for each of the permits. Each of the permit forms with associated fee schedules can be referenced either in our office or on our website at the following link:  
[http://cms4.revize.com/revize/watertown/departments/building\\_safety\\_and\\_zoning/application\\_forms.php#.WMsBaW8rK70](http://cms4.revize.com/revize/watertown/departments/building_safety_and_zoning/application_forms.php#.WMsBaW8rK70)

Please note that once the permit fee is paid, there are no additional fees required for inspections unless a code violation occurs. The permit fee covers all routine inspections. The permit is good for one (1) year from the date it is approved. Permits can be renewed for half the cost of the original permit after that time.

### **When are permit fees due?**

For the building permits, no fee is required until the inspector has reviewed the submittal packet and called the applicant to let them know the project is approved and the permit fee is ready to be paid for. At that time we accept payment in either cash or check made out to "City of Watertown".

For Electric, HVAC and Plumbing permits, payment and approval are completed at the time of submittal.

### **What happens after I get a permit?**

The applicant will receive a copy of the permit. The owner must then ensure the proper inspections are called in to the Building, Safety & Zoning Department's Secretary at (920) 262-4060. For instructions on when inspections are required, please reference the following link:

[http://cms4.revize.com/revize/watertown/departments/building\\_safety\\_and\\_zoning/when\\_to\\_call\\_for\\_inspections.php#WMsDeG8rK70](http://cms4.revize.com/revize/watertown/departments/building_safety_and_zoning/when_to_call_for_inspections.php#WMsDeG8rK70)

### **Your effort is appreciated**

The permit process may seem overwhelming and time-consuming when an owner is beginning a project. Just keep in mind that permits and inspections are built-in checks-and-balances making sure the work is done correctly. Codes are designed to keep owners and anyone in and around their buildings safe.

You may reach the Building, Safety and Zoning staff with any questions you may have:

Phone: 920-262-4060

Office: 106 Jones Street, Watertown  
Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor (Take the stairs to the second level, take a left at the top of the stairs and we are the only office on the left)