HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

WHEN DOES MY REPAIR NEED A PERMIT?

For contracted or do-it-yourself repairs

Homeowners often have questions about permits for repairs. Since requirements can vary from community to community, we always suggest calling your city's Building Department if you are unsure about permit requirements. The information below is based on permit requirements in Cleveland Heights:

1. WHEN IS A PERMIT NEEDED?

According to the Cleveland Heights Building Department, a permit is required:

A PERMIT IS REQUIRED	A PERMIT IS NOT NEEDED
• to demolish, alter, or make major repairs to any existing building structure, or any portion of that structure, or to build any new structure/addition • to do any electrical (other than minor corrections), plumbing, heating or air conditioning work • to do any concrete or asphalt work involving replacement or asphalt resurfacing, or any paving work (brick walks, etc.)	• painting • gutters/downspouts • tuckpointing • sidewalk leveling • asphalt sealing • minor repairs (such as replacing missing shingles or a rotted stair tread.)

Always call the Building Department if you are uncertain whether your repair requires a permit, as it may depend on the scope of the work. For example, no permit is needed if only roofing material and part of the sheathing are being replaced; if all the sheathing or any part of the roof structure is being replaced, a permit is required. (Even if no permit is required, the roofing contractor must be registered in Cleveland Heights – see below). No permit is required to replace kitchen cabinets if the new ones are the same size and in the same location; just obtain electrical and plumbing permits, as required.

> **NEW STRUCTURES AND DESIGN CHANGES**
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> Note, however, that if you want to build a new structure or change the design of an exterior element (from brick steps to wood, for example), you'll need to submit a plan to the Architectural Board of Review and get their approval before a permit can be issued.

2. CAN A HOMEOWNER GET A PERMIT?

Yes. Homeowners who own and occupy a 1-, 2-, or 3-family home can obtain a permit for most repairs, but only if they will be doing the work themselves. (Do not agree to get a permit for a contractor – you'll lose all the protections the permit process can give you.)

3. WHAT IF I'LL BE USING A CONTRACTOR?

To obtain a permit for work that requires one, the contractor must be licensed and bonded in Cleveland Heights. (It's safest to call the Building Department yourself and ask if the contractor has met the necessary requirements.) Check that your contractor is licensed under the same company name as appears on your estimate – no contractor is allowed to do work under someone else's license. Home Repair Resource Center also suggests that you make sure the contractor is familiar with Cleveland Heights code before you accept their bid, to avoid unpleasant surprises ("I didn't know the City requires that sac mix for the concrete. I'll need to charge you more for it....")

> **REMEMBER**
> It's the homeowner's responsibility to make sure the contractor has obtained the appropriate permits for the work. Failure to do so can result in a Stop-Work Order.

4. AFTER GETTING THE PERMIT—WHAT THEN?

The permit should be posted on a front door or window (visible from the street) while work is going on. Whether the work is do-it-yourself or contracted, it must pass inspection to make sure it meets Building Code. Depending on the type of repair, the Building Department may need to inspect for code compliance at various stages during the process, as well as upon completion.

The inspections are not automatic – you or your contractor must call and make arrangements to get them done. (If you will be doing the work yourself, ask how to arrange the necessary inspections when you obtain the permit.)

> **BEFORE YOUR LAST PAYMENT**
> Home Repair Resource Center strongly recommends that, if you are not present at the final inspection, you call the Building Department and confirm that any contracted work has passed the final inspection before making your last payment.

5. WHAT IF THE REPAIR IS A VIOLATION?

In Cleveland Heights, the inspectors for the Building Department are not the same as the inspectors who do Point-of-Sale or Systematic Exterior Inspections of your property. If you have questions about a repair on your violations list, call the Inspections Department, and ask for clarification. (An inspector from that department can come out to your home, if necessary, and show you exactly what you're being asked to do.) Usually, your violation list will indicate when a permit is required for a cited repair – but it's best to check with the Building Department to be safe, if you have any question at all. Once a cited repair has been corrected, it will be up to the Housing Inspections Department to remove the violation from your list.

6. WILL THE PERMIT INSPECTION ENSURE GOOD WORK?

The permit process protects both the homeowner and the community by ensuring work is done to the current Building Code. But, the code specifies only a minimum standard, and may not cover everything that is important to you – especially details involving "quality of workmanship." It's best to make sure that those issues are addressed in your written contract.

PUT IT IN THE BID

In addition, Home Repair Resource Center always suggests that the bid contain the phrase, "all work will be done to meet or exceed current standards of the trade and in a neat and workmanlike manner." (Note: Home Repair Resource Center has developed specifications that can help you include important details for a number of common repairs.)

One final suggestion – some contractors, believing that homeowners look only for the cheapest estimate, will submit their bid based on the least expensive way to meet code requirements. You may wish to have the contractor use more durable types of materials or repair techniques, despite their higher cost. Make sure you tell each contractor to base the estimate on those choices, and check the final contract to make sure it specifies exactly what you want to be done.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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