Does My Building Project Require A Permit? By: Martin Van Berlo

Does my building project require a permit? This is a question that is quite common at the Building Dept, especially when people start thinking about those outdoor projects that they may have dreamt about during those long cold winter months. With summer supposedly in full swing now, it is the perfect time to remind people that permits may be required for the projects they are doing or planning to do.

Section R105 of the 2000 Michigan Residential Code (MRC) contains the code requirements for what does and does not require a building permit in residential construction. Section R105.1 states:

“Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the regulation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.”

Section R105.2 provides a list of what is exempt form permits. Section R105.2 states:

“Exemption from the permit requirements of the code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of the code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction. Permits are nor required for any of the following:

1. One story detached accessory structures, if the floor area does not exceed 200 square feet.
2. A fence that is not more than 6 feet high.
3. A retaining wall that is not more than 4 feet in height, measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge.
4. A water tank supported directly upon grade if the capacity is not more than 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter is not greater than 2 to 1.
5. A sidewalk or driveway that is not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade and is not over any basement or story below.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
7. A prefabricated swimming pool that is less than 24 inches deep.
8. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a 1 or 2 family dwelling.
9. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall.”

There are additional exemptions for permits for subtrade work such as electrical, plumbing and mechanical work. As can be seen by the code text noted above, projects such as roofing and re-roofing, installation of new siding, decks, replacement of windows, and elevated walkways and stairs are not listed as exempt from permits. Permits are required for those types of projects. Should you have any questions regarding whether or not a permit may be required for your construction project, feel free to contact the Building Dept. With those questions.