

BUILDING INSPECTIONS

Building Inspections is responsible for enforcing various state and municipal codes, maintaining acceptable standards for City housing and public buildings, and improving and correcting conditions assuring a reasonable level of safety, health and well-being for our community.

Q & A

Q: What type of work requires a permit?

A: It depends. Decks, remodeling, pools, siding, sheds over 50 square feet among others most likely will require a permit. If in doubt, it is best to contact Building Inspections at 832-6411 before starting any work.

Q: Can I do the work myself on my house?

A: In most cases, yes, as long as it is a single family home and you own and occupy it. You would still need to obtain the same building permits as a contractor does.

Q: Will the City perform a property survey for me if I do not know where my lot lines are?

A: No, the City does not perform surveys for homeowners. We can produce a copy of the plat showing lot dimensions along with easements. If you desire or need a survey, you will need to hire a contractor to perform that service. It is important that you do not assume that an existing fence is accurately marking a property line.

Q: I am replacing my older furnace that vents into the masonry chimney (along with my water heater) with a high efficiency one that vents to the outside with PVC pipe. Do I need to have a chimney liner installed for the old water heater?

A: Each situation is a little different. The only way to make sure is to contact Building Inspections and talk to the heating inspector. It is important that if a liner is needed, it get installed immediately. Failure to do so could result in long term problems and future costs. Bottom line is that it is never wrong to install a correctly sized chimney liner system.

Q: I hear a lot about “water re-use” lately. What are examples of water re-use?

A: Rain barrels are a great option of water re-use for your yard. As far as re-using water inside the home, the State of Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services must approve any system before it is installed.

Q: I am looking to open a new business in the City. I have an existing building in mind, but I'm not sure if it will meet codes for me to run my business. Who should I contact?

A: Contact the Building Inspections Division of Public Works. We offer a free courtesy inspection of the building and will inform you of what would need to be done to bring the building into compliance.

Q: Do I need a commercial grade exhaust hood if I am going to make and/or sell food?

A: It depends on the menu and process you use to prepare/make the food. We recommend you meet with a Building Inspector to discuss your plan so we may help you with the requirements.

Q: I have hired a contractor to perform a remodeling project for me. He says he will obtain all necessary permits. Is there anything I need to do?

A: For peace of mind, you may want to contact the Inspections Division to make sure the proper permits have been obtained. Residential contractors are required to be registered with the State – ask for their registration number. You may also wish to check to make sure all inspections have been completed. If inspections are not performed, the permit will remain open, and you may be charged a re-inspection fee at a later date.

Q: Is it ok for my neighbor's sump pump to discharge onto my property, the sidewalk or into the street?

A: No. The sump pump discharge cannot be directed to flow onto a neighbor's property or onto any sidewalk, street or other public area. The discharge cannot be located in such a manner that creates ponds of water or any other public nuisance. However, if the discharge is located on a hill and the water filters down onto adjacent property, there may not be anything the City can do.

Q: A house on my block is in foreclosure and no one is maintaining it or cutting the grass. Can the City do anything to ensure that the home does not become blight in the neighborhood?

A: When a property is not being maintained, the City can take action to cut the grass and remove debris. The process starts when the City receives a complaint. Because the City is required to obtain special inspection warrants it can take a few weeks to get the lawn cut or have the debris removed. You can start the process by contacting Inspections at 832-6411. Eventually these properties are sold at a Sheriff's sale or sold in a "short sale." This process can take anywhere from six months to well over a year.

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For more information please visit: www.appleton.org or call 832-6411.