

Herald Tribune

At last, the primer on permits

By Harold Bubil

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Eight days ago, Herald-Tribune readers were promised that my Feb. 16 column would deal with the topic of building permits. The only problem is that it did not. This week, I am fulfilling that promise (better late than never). I apologize for getting your hopes up, and I hope you find this column satisfactory:

One of the smartest guys I know came up to me the other day and said, "We just closed-in our lanai. Did I need to get a building permit for that?"

Now you're asking.

According to government building departments, you don't need a permit for painting, wallpaper and wallcovering work, flooring (carpeting, tile, wood), replacement of fascia and soffits on one- and two-story residences, resurfacing of driveways, or non-structural repairs of less than \$1,000 in cost. Otherwise, get a permit, especially if the work involves structural elements, plumbing or electrical.

The permitting process allows the local government to approve the work in advance, and inspect it during construction, to make sure it meets zoning and building codes, which protect human health, safety and welfare. The penalty for doing work without a permit is costly.

If you have had work done without a permit and want to come clean, apply for an "after-the-fact permit," said Greg Yantorno, manager of inspection services for Sarasota County. "The penalty is three times the amount of the permit, plus the original permit fee." The fee is based on the contract price, or based on the inspections required and the scope of the work being performed, said Yantorno.

And what would happen if the homeowner did not apply and the building department never knew about it?

"Probably nothing," said Yantorno, "until the owner went to sell the house." At that time, a buyer doing due diligence may discover that unpermitted work was done, and demand that the owner secure an after-the-fact permit and pay the triple-fee penalty. The work had better meet the codes in place at the time, by the way, or the work may need to be redone. That could mean tearing down a costly addition to the house.

For more information, go to your Web search engine and type: Do I need a building permit in (name your town)?

Some examples of when a permit is required in the City of Sarasota:

Any construction that alters the size or occupancy of a building.

Construction, alteration or replacement of any exterior walls.

Enclosing existing carports, porches and screen rooms for any purpose.

Construction of any raised deck, attached or detached, with or without a roof.

Replacement of columns, beams, joists, rafters or any other structural component.

Replacement of wall, floor or roof sheathing.

Repair and replacement of interior or exterior stairs and/or guardrails.

Electrical, plumbing or air-conditioning when altering, adding to, or deleting from the system.

Interior load bearing and non-load bearing walls, alterations or replacements.

Replacement of kitchen cabinets and counter tops.

Replacement of windows, doors, garage doors or skylights in existing or altered wall openings.

Hurricane shutters, all types. Electric fee will be paid for power-operated units.

Roofing; replacement of any roofing component.

Masonry or engineered Styrofoam privacy walls or fences with any masonry components and fences.

Dock, boat-lift, seawall or bulkhead installation or repair.

Fire repairs.

Storage and utility sheds.

Signs, engineered monument, pole or wall signs.

For Sarasota County's permit guidelines, go to https://building.scgov.net/OSG/Sarasota/INF01_

[Building_Permit_Requirements.pdf](#). For more on this topic, read my blog at www.heraldtribune.com/haroldbubil.

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20080223/COLUMNIST10/802230478>