

# Common Questions for Building Inspections

## **Q) What type of work requires a permit?**

A) Permits are required for most new buildings/structures, structural alterations, change in building use, siding, decks, fences, sheds (over 50 sq. ft.), demolition, moving of buildings and installing or altering all plumbing, electrical and HVAC equipment. If you have any questions whether a permit is required contact the Inspections Division at 832-6411.

## **Q) Can I do work on my own house.**

A) In most cases, yes. Electrical, plumbing, HVAC and building permits may be issued to the owner of the house as long as they currently occupy the house.

## **Q) Does the City require a building permit for siding and roofing?**

A) The City requires a permit for siding. The fee is \$10.00 per \$1,000 of estimated cost. Roofing permits are not required unless all old sheathing is removed, exposing bare rafters. While the City does not issue roofing permits, all state building code, (UDC sec 321.28) regulations must be followed.

## **Q) How close from to lot line can a fence be erected?**

A) Fences can go right up to the lot line. The finished side of the fence has to face the neighbor. Permits are required for fences. The fee is \$40. The City will not tell you where your lot line is located. The home owner could locate survey irons or hire a surveyor if they want to know the location of the lot line.

## **Q) Can I build a detached garage on my property?**

A) Generally a garage can be built on most lots in the City. Since many variables are involved (i.e. lot size, green space, zoning district) see our accessory building handout for rules and regulations.

## **Q) Do I need a permit to finish my basement?**

A) Yes, a building and electrical permit will be required. If any plumbing or heating work is being done, those permits will be required as well. Draw a plan showing room sizes (label rooms as to their use) and total finished square footage. The permit fee for the building permit is \$10.00 per \$1,000 of estimate cost. Plumbing, heating and electrical permits are \$40.00.

## **Q) Do I need a building permit for a play set?**

A) No permit is required for a typical playhouse or swing set. For anything out of the ordinary, call the Inspections Division to confirm.

**Q) Can I sleep in my basement?**

A) No space in a basement may be used for sleeping unless the basement has two legal exists and adequate light and ventilation. See out basement finish handout.

**Q) Do I need a permit to remodel my kitchen?**

A) If you are not moving walls, a building permit is not required. Contact the plumbing and electrical inspectors to see if they are require permits.

**Q) I received a letter stating I have an open permit. What do I do?**

A) Contact the Inspections Division for information and to set up an appointment. Usually, these letters indicate that an open permit has expired. There is no requirement that the work done be inspected and permit closed. However, unapproved permits often become an issue prior to the property selling in the future.

**Q) How many people can live in a house or apartment?**

A) Section 4-420 of the Municipal Code for the City of Appleton requires that every dwelling unit contain 150 sq. ft. for the first occupant and 100 sq. ft. for each additional occupant. Rooms used for sleeping shall contain 60 sq. ft. for the first occupant and 40 sq. ft. for each additional occupant.

**Q) Do I need a permit for a swimming pool?**

A) Any pool deeper than 24 inches requires a permit and is required to be guarded with a four (4) foot high fence. Pool permits are \$40.00.

**Q) What are my building setbacks?**

A) One and two family residential

	R1A	R1B	R1C	R-2
Front	20' (25' on arterial)	20' (25' on arterial)	10' (20' on arterial)	20' (25' on arterial)
Side	8'	6'	5' - single family 6' - all others	6'
Rear	25'	25'	25'	25'

**Q) Tree limbs from a neighbor's tree are hanging over my property and dead branches could fall onto my house. Can the City address this?**

A) There is no City ordinance addressing maintenance of trees on private property or dangerous tree limbs hanging over another property. When limbs hang over a property line or fall on a neighboring property, it is a matter that the two neighbors need to work out between themselves.

**Q) My neighbor's sump pump is constantly running and the water is coming onto my property. Can the City make them discharge the water somewhere else?**

A) Section 4-271(e) of the Appleton Municipal Code prohibits discharging of clear water directly onto an adjacent property or creating ponds of standing water. However, if the sump pump discharge is simply flowing downhill, this may not be a violation.

**Q) A house on my block is in foreclosure and no one is taking care of it. What can the City do to ensure this house does not become a blight?**

A) When a house is no longer being maintained the City is able to eventually cut the grass or remove debris from the property. However, sometimes these processes take time. Once a complaint is received, required notices go out to the owner of record. If there is no response the City must obtain a Special Inspection Warrant to cut the grass or remove debris. After a complaint is made it could take one or two weeks before the grass is cut or debris removed. The City does not make corrections to the building.

Eventually, most of these properties are sold at Sheriff's sale. This process could take six months to a year. It is recommended that once weeds are over eight inches a complaint is called into 832-6411.