

CITY OF SANDUSKY - CONTRACTOR INFORMATION

When do I need a contractor?

Owner/occupants of a one, two or three family structure may do the work on their own home – permits are still required. Owner/occupant means that you must be the owner as listed on the Erie County Tax rolls, will occupy the structure when the work is completed and perform the work yourself. If the work is for a new home or a major remodel before occupation, you must be the one that will reside at this address after the certificate of occupancy is issued. If you plan on doing the work yourself, you must sign an affidavit attesting that you are the owner and the occupant, that the work will be done by yourself or a member of your immediate family or member of your household and that you have the ability to do the work yourself.

If you have purchased a property to remodel and resell (flip) or if this is rental property then you cannot do the work yourself as an owner/occupant. You may however, register as a contractor and perform some of the work. (see registration requirements below)

Any work performed on structures which are 4 or more dwelling units or that are of a commercial nature must be done by registered contractors. Any structure that has a business and an apartment(s) is considered commercial.

What is a contractor?

“Contractor” means an individual, partnership, corporation, joint venture or other entity which builds, constructs, repairs, replaces, remodels, alters or otherwise improves any land or building or any portion thereof. This includes the “general” contractor as well as any “sub-contractors”.

Why use a “Registered” Contractor?

First, because it is a City of Sandusky requirement by ordinance. It also means that you are hiring a contractor who carries the proper credentials, liability insurance and has Worker’s compensation for their employees.

Specialty contractors must meet State of Ohio requirements which include training, experience and examinations in their trade, as well as maintain continuing education. It’s a fact that the five specialty trades can blow up, burn down or flood a building. If they hold a State license it means that the State of Ohio recognizes that company as being knowledgeable enough and having enough skills to trust them with other people’s lives.

The registration and/or State license does not guarantee that a contractor is a “good” contractor but does show the contractor obeys the law and understands the consequences for not doing so.

The State of Ohio encourages the local building departments to have registrations in place for contractors. Lists of registered contractors are available through the building department office, by email and are posted on our website. You may call the office to determine if a contractor you are interested in using is registered and find other projects that contractor has worked on. We also recommend that you check with the Better Business Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce.

Whether you hire a contractor or do your own work, the inspectors of the building department are here to make sure your project proceeds safely and meets the minimum code requirements. Anytime you have a question call the building department offices – we are here to help you.

What are the requirements to register as a contractor?

Building Contractors must provide the City with: information proving that they are compliant with the Bureau of Worker’s Compensation laws, proof of liability insurance, proof of registration with the City’s Income Tax Department. Building Contractors must pay an annual registration fee of \$100.00.

Building Contractors include but are not limited to: General Contractors, Framing Contractors, Roofing Contractors, Foundation Contractors, Fire Safety Contractors, etc.

Specialty Contractors must provide the City with: information proving that they are compliant with the Bureau of Worker’s Compensation laws, proof of registration with the City’s Income Tax Department and proof of the State of Ohio’s contractor license which is issued by the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board (OCILB). Specialty Contractors are licensed by the State of Ohio for the following trades: Electric, HVAC, Hydronics, Plumbing and Refrigeration. Specialty contractors must pay an annual registration fee of \$100.00. Specialty Contractors must display their license on items associated with the specialty contracting business. Such items may include business cards, vehicles containing the name of the business, advertisements and promotional materials. The City of Sandusky requires that contractors in these trades hold the State license to do residential as well as commercial work.

If a contractor holds registration in more than one of the Building or Specialty trades their registration has a \$200.00 annual maximum fee.

Excavators & Sewer Builders or Sidewalk Contractors must provide the City with: A surety bond and proof of liability insurance with the City of Sandusky named as co-insured. These contractors must pay an annual registration fee of \$25.00.

HOW TO HIRE A CONTRACTOR

As always, do not forget if you are hiring a contractor to do your work – use a City of Sandusky Registered Contractor. The first step is finding the contractor – which can be difficult. There are listings for registered contractors available from the Building Department office, on the Internet, in the phone book, through trade organizations, bulletin boards, etc. The best contractors are usually found through word-of-mouth referrals. Ask friends, family and co-workers if they can recommend contractors for your project.

Any contractor working in the City of Sandusky is required to be registered with the Building Department.

When you find a contractor do not hesitate to ask for references. Don't always search only for the contractor who can do the job for the least money. Remember to ask about maintenance and warranties. Sometimes those things cost more up-front but are cost saving in the end. Call the contractors references and ask their past clients if you can see their work. Ask important questions such as:

- Was the contractor punctual?
- Were any changes discussed before proceeding?
- Was the jobsite cleaned up at the end of each day?
- Was the job completed in the period given?
- Did the job come in on budget?

Ask for material supplier references. If a contractor shops at a particular lumberyard or supply house ask if you can contact his account manager for a reference. If he or she pays their bill on time, it tells you they are responsible and have good credit standing with their suppliers.

You should try to get at least three bids for any phase of your construction. Make sure the bid includes the following:

- Scope of work – detailed list of what the contractor will perform
- Timeline to start and complete the project
- Payment schedule
- Process to approve any change during construction.
- Labor and materials should be separated. This will give you more information when comparing bids for the same work.

Be careful if a contractor asks for large sums of money upfront. While a small deposits is acceptable for securing their work, large sums required up front are a warning sign.

Selecting the right contractor for the job is the most important decision you can make. Take the time to investigate their referrals, past performance, standing with material suppliers, and check to see if they are registered with the City of Sandusky's Building Department.

All of these factors should be included in the hiring process. Whether you are building a new home or replacing a fence, the contractor is working for you!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the City of Sandusky's Building Department at 419-627-5940.

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