

# City of Fort Atkinson

Building Inspection Department

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## What if I want to hire a contractor?

If you are like most families, your home is your most valuable possession and when your home needs to be remodeled or repaired you want competent artisans to do a quality job.

### References

How do you select a responsible company to complete your project? Your first step is to have prospective contractors furnish a list of references for recently completed projects. Follow-up by contacting several of the references and ask if you could stop by and look at the work. A call to the Building Inspection Department will let you know if the contractor has completed other projects or if there have been any compliance problems.

### Certification

Wisconsin also requires contractors to be certified under the Dwelling Contractor Certification Program. Ask the contractor for his certification number, this will be verified when a building permit is obtained. This program does not deal with competency of the contractor, it only ensures that he has met the minimum financial responsibility requirements as set forth by the State. Under the Dwelling Contractor Financial Responsibility Certification Program any contractor wishing to take out a permit for work on a residential dwelling must be certified with the State. As the name of the program implies, contractors must prove that they are financially responsible. They must show compliance with workers' compensation, unemployment compensation laws and proof of liability insurance. These requirements provide protection to the homeowner in case of an accident on the job or damage to property. Homeowners may still obtain their own building permit but will be cautioned that they may be held liable for injury or damage.

### Licenses

All plumbing new installations and repairs to plumbing that is not the owner's primary residence require a State licensed plumber to conduct the work. Electrical contractors should hold a State license as well. These licenses require competency and experience. The Building Inspection Department will verify license validation prior to the issuance of a permit and inspections.

#### Avoid hiring any contractor who:

- Asks you to sign an "estimate" or "authorization" before you have decided to hire them.
- Appears to be willing to do the job at an unusually low price.
- Only provides a post office box for their business address.
- Requires full or substantial payment before work begins.

# Hiring a Contractor

- Refuses to provide you with a written estimate or contract.
- Refuses to provide you with a Wisconsin Department of Commerce Dwelling Contractor Financial Responsibility number (for builders) or license numbers (for electricians, plumbers and heating contractors).
- Refuses to provide you with references.
- Shows up at your door unsolicited.
- Uses high pressure sales tactics.

### Contracts

It is strongly recommended that a written contract or proposal be used for all work being done. This is signed by both parties and should include the total cost for project, the payment schedule, who is responsible for obtaining the building permit, how changes or additions are handled, and the time frame for completion of the job.

When it is time to pay contractors for work completed, many banks and financial institutions require that lien waivers be submitted prior to the release of payment. This assures the homeowner that materials and labor have been paid for and suppliers cannot put liens on the property.

### Other Information

- You can check the status of any person holding a license or credential from the State of Wisconsin from the Department of Commerce Safety and Buildings Website:

<http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/SB/SB-HomePage.html>

**Note:** The City of Fort Atkinson Building Inspection Department has made every effort to insure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, due to the possibility of errors or other aspects of electronic communication that is beyond the City's control, the City of Fort Atkinson does not guarantee the accuracy of this document and is not liable for reliance on this information. This document was created as basic plan submittal guide under the Code in effect at the time of creation. It is not intended to cover all circumstances.