

Do I Really Need a Building Permit?



David G. Hunt, MCR, CCIM, SIOR
Hunt Corporate Services, Inc.

Q: We are anticipating building some additional office space within our industrial building. Do we really need to get a building permit?

A: There are several reasons that you should always obtain a building permit for construction. To be clear, we are not talking about redecoration, so tasks such as painting, carpeting, wall repair, ceiling repair, or replacing a door fall into this category. But permits should always be filed for the actual construction of new offices or the installation of a new bathroom, as an example.

One of the best reasons for filing permits is to avoid creating problems down the road when the property is eventually financed or sold. Your buyer or mortgagee is going to want to make sure that the property and its improvements all have the proper certificates of occupancy and necessary permits before title passes or funds are provided. Over the years, I have seen this scenario many times: A closing must be postponed (or even worse, a deal is lost) because of the time delay that is incurred in filing for permits, possibly re-doing work, having

inspections, and receiving the necessary certificates from the proper municipal authority. In addition, any work that has not been done to code may often have to be ripped out and rebuilt to code, so now you have paid for your project twice!

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Another reason to spend the time and money on properly permitting your project is potential liability that you may incur. If your construction was not built to fire code, as an example, and there is a fire that destroys property or injures people, you could face severe legal liability issues, and perhaps even criminal charges. Do you really want to

incur this sort of liability to save a little time and money? Most of us like to sleep at night!

In most municipalities, if you are caught building without a permit, the job will be completely shut down. Now, not only have you really delayed your project, but you are in the middle of construction. The only way to resolve it is to start the entire process necessary to obtain permits that should have been done in the first place! And of course, at this point, your municipal building inspectors are going to be especially vigilant and non-forgiving.

As a construction company, we cannot afford to build for a client who is not willing to obtain the proper permits for their project. We work with the municipalities over and over again, and the last thing that we need is a black eye in the industry. Follow our lead and that of every other reputable contractor. Building without a permit may seem like a shortcut, for both time and money. The truth is that building without permits usually results in more time and money being spent to rectify the problems that you created. Do yourself a favor, and do it right the first time!

David G. Hunt, MCR, CCIM, SIOR is president of Hunt Corporate Services, Inc. and Hunt Construction Services, Inc., Plainview, N.Y.
