

Opinion: Important to know the rules before construction begins

By Michael Lavallee

In general, a building permit is required before doing construction work. This includes building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical work. Section 105.1 of the adopted California Building Code states:

Deck Repairs Require a Permit “Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.”

The code also includes a long list of exceptions. Some of the more common ones include, one-story detached tool or storage accessory structures less than 120 square feet, fences not over six feet in height, retaining walls not over four feet in height from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops, similar finish work, cord and plug connected heat, vent or air conditioning appliances, replacement of minor parts, stopping of plumbing leaks, replacing a toilet seal, or emergency work as long as a permit is obtained the next business day.

A complete list of all exceptions can be found on the Truckee website where the Building and Safety Division has prepared a policy. The policy includes specific code wording, code exceptions and additional specific Town of Truckee exceptions. It can be found online.

Work that involves new buildings, additions, bathroom or kitchen remodeling, replacement of building systems including roofs, water heaters, furnaces, siding, windows, plumbing, electrical or mechanical work requires a permit. To assure an erosion hazard is not created, grading or excavation work that disturbs over 500 square feet or that involves over 20 cubic yards of cut or fill requires a permit.

The above are building code requirements only. Work also needs to comply with Town Planning and Engineering standards. Exterior work to buildings located in the historic district requires historic design review by the Town. In all areas, retaining walls are regulated when located within required property setbacks. The Planning Division can be reached at (530) 582.7820, and Engineering can be reached at (530) 582.2911.

Obtaining a permit and required inspections will assure that work is done correctly, is safe, and meets minimum adopted codes. Please be aware that there are penalties for doing construction work without a permit, and if work was done in violation of the code, it may need to be redone. If you are not sure whether or not a permit is required, please call the Building and Safety Division at (530) 582.7820.

Michael Lavallee is the chief building official for the town of Truckee.