

# CHECK WITH CHICK... YOUR BUILDING OFFICIAL



In our first newsletter, I touched on the importance of getting building permits before you start a building project. This month I want to cover the next step after you get a permit, selecting a contractor to do the work. More specifically, I'll cover the importance and requirement to use licensed contractors for certain types of contracting work in De Soto.

In 2002, the City became one of the metropolitan area's charter cities to adopt the Contractor Licensing Program (CLP). The program requires contractors to become licensed and insured in order to perform a wide range of construction functions including general construction, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, roofing, swimming pools, and framing. De Soto

is an active member of the program; in fact, I currently serve as a member of the Contractor Licensing Review Board which oversees the program.

Insurance, as we are all aware, is a very important protection for you as a homeowner or property owner. The CLP requires all participating contractors to carry a minimum of one million dollars general liability coverage per single occurrence and finished project. In addition, contractors must also maintain workman's compensation coverage. Another significant benefit of the licensing program is the testing and continuing education programs offered to participating contractors. Those programs help ensure quality, informed and code compliant work for our citizens.

When you apply for a building permit you are asked to list the contractors you are using; that allows me to verify that the contractors doing the work are licensed for your protection. However, when work is done outside of the permit process, you run the risk of using unlicensed and potentially unqualified, uninsured contractors.

Please heed this advice—never contract to do work with someone who comes to your door soliciting discounted work without first checking them out. Never pay for work up front from unknown companies without having them provide a written contract and completing the agreed-upon work first. ALWAYS apply for permits and ask if your contractors have applied for permits for their work. A good example of this are “Storm Chasers” who prey upon citizen's following wind storms or tornados. They'll knock on your door and offer cheap repairs and roofing, often overcharging for doing shoddy work or leaving the job incomplete. The homeowner is often left “holding the bag” to finish or have additional work done.

I have recently seen several HVAC and hot water heater replacements that were completed by unlicensed contractors without permits or inspections; they were not installed to the building code standards, which are designed to insure residents' safety and protection. Hot water heaters are

required to have a thermal expansion tank installed; often when unlicensed, improperly trained contractors perform the replacements, they fail to meet this requirement correctly. The money homeowners think they have saved by avoiding the permit and using an unlicensed contractor proves to be costly in the end when the manufacturer will not honor its warranty should you have a failure.

Replacements of furnace and air conditioners (HVAC) are other expensive projects that need to be correctly installed by licensed professionals. The correct sizing and installation of these units is an important factor in energy consumption and directly impacts your utility costs. Starting in 2011, HVAC contractors will have to size these replacement units in accordance with ACCA Manual J requirements to meet the energy requirements of the state, federal and local building codes.

I cannot emphasize enough about the importance of obtaining a building permit and using a licensed contractor to do work on your home or business. If you have any questions relating to your mechanical or electrical replacement plans, construction projects or contractors, remember to: “Check with Chick,” your De Soto Building Official. Additional information is also available on the Building Inspection pages on the City of De Soto website. ([www.desotoks.us](http://www.desotoks.us))