

Helpful Tips for the Owner-Builder

When the property owner decides to act as their own building contractor, they are commonly referred to as "Owner-Builders." The following tips are intended to assist owner-builders in successfully completing their construction projects. Because most owner-builders are homeowners who are not intimately involved in the construction and inspection process (as are most building contractors), the experience can be overwhelming. The helpful tips listed below will assist you in understanding many of the requirements and regulations that will impact your owner-builder project.

- √ **“What should I do with the dog?”** Most Building Inspectors have experienced problems with dogs. Even the “nice” dogs have been known to bite strangers. For the safety of the Building Inspectors, dogs must not be allowed to run loose in the area where the Building Inspector is to conduct inspections. Please make arrangements to communicate with the Building Inspector directly that the dog has been secured. If you will not be home at the time of the inspection, it is a good idea to leave a note on the front door or the gate that the dog has been secured and that it is safe to enter the fenced yard area to perform the inspection.
- √ **“Do I need to be present for the inspection?”** Most inspections will require that someone over 18 years of age be present. It is also advisable that the person doing the actual construction be present to interact with the Building Inspector should questions arise. Additionally, the Building Inspector can be a valuable source of construction information for the owner-builder. On some types of inspections the Building Inspector needs to have access to the interior of the building; on others, they can perform their inspection from the exterior. On those occasions when the Building Inspector does not need to inspect construction features on the interior of the building, an adult need not be present if the approved plans and Permit/Job Card are on the site and there are no dogs loose in the area and access to the area is available (i.e., no locked gates, etc.). Nevertheless, it is a good idea to communicate with the Building Inspector (via a phone call or a note on the front door) if you will not be available for the inspection.
- √ **“How can I get in contact with the Building Inspector?”** The Building Inspectors are best reached by phone between 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. in the morning or between 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the afternoon. During most of the day they are in the field at a variety of locations performing inspections and are not available by phone.
- √ **“Does the Building Inspector need to see the City-Approved plans?”** YES. The Building Inspector’s primary role is to assure that the project is constructed as shown on the plans that were approved by the City. When the permit was issued, you were provided with a set of plans that were stamped “Approved.” These are the plans that must be available to the Building Inspector for the inspection. Any deviations from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the City’s plan checkers before the Building Inspector will approve the work.
- √ **“What if I fail the inspection?”** Unfortunately, inspections are not always passed on the first attempt. The Building Inspector will let you know, either verbally or in writing what the problems are and in some cases, how to correct the particular problem. After the corrections have been made, you will need to schedule a re-inspection so that the Building Inspector can verify the corrective work. Please be sure to make all of the corrections before re-scheduling the re-inspection. If re-inspections are scheduled and the corrective work has not been done, the Building Inspector may assess a \$150.00 re-inspection fee which must be paid at City Hall before any additional inspections will be performed at the site.
- √ **“What about retrofit Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Alarms in my home?”** Most home improvement projects require that smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms be retrofitted into the existing home. The Building Inspector will need to verify that the alarms have been installed in bedrooms, hallways and stairways, etc. The homeowner may choose to complete the “Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Retrofit Verification Form” in lieu of having the Building Inspector perform the inspection. The specific requirements for the type and location of these alarms is contained in the “Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Retrofit Verification Form” available at City Hall.

**For more information, contact: City of Moreno Valley Building and Safety Division
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