

New Statewide Rules for Pulling Building Permits

Judging by the number questions I field every day – by phone, email and at workshops -- there's still a lot of confusion about the new credential requirements for pulling building permits. Here's a summary of the new rules.

If you need to pull a building permit for a one- or two-family dwelling building or remodeling job in Wisconsin, you need two business credentials from the Department of Commerce.

Dwelling Contractor Credential

The first is called the Dwelling Contractor Credential. It used to be called the Dwelling Contractor Financial Responsibility credential. You get this credential by submitting an application form, \$35, and a certificate of insurance stating that your company has a minimum of \$250,000 (per occurrence) of general liability insurance. This credential is held by the company and must be renewed annually.

New: Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential

As of January 1, 2008, the second credential you need is called the Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential. It must be renewed every two years, and it's held by an individual. That individual can be the company's owner or partner or an employee of the person who holds the Dwelling Contractor Credential.

Being Grandfathered vs. Needing the Initial Training Class

For a limited time, there are two ways to apply for the new Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential.

The first way is to be "grandfathered" in. If your company held a valid Dwelling Contractor Credential anytime on or between April 11 and April 14, 2006, the business owner, partner, chairman of the board or chief executive officer may apply for the Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential by submitting to the Department of Commerce the application form and \$40. More than one person may be grandfathered to gain eligibility for a qualifier certification. It could be someone who was the business owner, partner, chairman of the board, chief executive officer, or the contact person of record. However, just being an employee of the business is not sufficient to be grandfathered in.

The second way to qualify for the Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential is to take a special 12-credit initial training class. This course must be approved by the Department of Commerce. You can find a list of initial training classes on the Department of Commerce's web site www.commerce.wi.gov. Go to the Safety & Buildings Division. Click on "Education Classes," then select "Dwelling Contractor Qualifier." Internet and DVD versions are available, in addition to live classes across the state. The live classes will be 12 hours long. For example, WBA's "New Builder Education" class is 8 hours one day and 4 hours the second day. You must attend all 12 hours, and you must answer 70% or more questions correctly on a test that covers the course content. The course provider will give you proof that you passed the exam. Then you need to submit that proof, the Department of Commerce's application form and \$40 to the Department of Commerce in order to apply for your Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential. Please note that separate courses of 1, 2, 3, 4 hours, etc., **may not** be added up to earn credit for the initial course.

Do You Hold the New Credential?

Letters were sent out in August, 2007 informing people if they were eligible to be grandfathered in. Be aware that the application forms for both credentials (Dwelling Contractor and Dwelling Contractor Qualifier) look very similar. Because of this, it is possible you applied for it and didn't realize the application was for the new credential. It's also possible you missed the letter. Look again, as you don't want to miss this grandfathering opportunity.

For assurance, you can check your credential status on the Department of Commerce's web site. Go to Safety & Buildings and click on "Check Credential Status." Search using your last name. When you enter the search criteria remember this credential is held by the individual, not the company.

If you do not yet have your Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential, you must apply before September 1, 2009 in order to take advantage of your grandfathered status. It is not enough to hold a letter from the Department of Commerce that says you're eligible to be grandfathered in. In order to pull a building permit, you need to actually present the Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential card.

Continuing Education Requirement

Once you have your Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential, you will need to earn an additional 12 credits of continuing education before you apply to renew your credential. You can find a list of continuing education classes on the Department of Commerce's web site www.commerce.wi.gov. Go to the Safety and Buildings Division. Click on "Education Classes," then click on DCQ Dwelling Contractor Qualifier, then select "Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Continuing Ed Credits View." Internet and DVD versions are available, in addition to live classes across the state for varying numbers of credits.

You will also likely receive many brochures about courses offered by a variety of providers in addition to the Wisconsin Builders Association and its affiliate local associations such as technical schools, lumberyards, building material suppliers or manufacturers. Before you commit to any classes, **always check for three things:**

(1) Approval by the Department of Commerce

(2) Approved by the Department of Commerce for continuing education credits for the Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential

(3) A Department of Commerce course ID number

For example, WBA's UDC Training 2008 "Knowing It Inside Out," course ID #9193, offered 4 continuing education credits. For continuing education purposes, separate courses of 1, 2, 3, 4 hours, etc., may be added up to earn 12 credits over the course of time.

You will need to apply to renew your Dwelling Contractor Qualifier Credential 3 months before it expires, so be sure you have your 12 credits earned by that time.

WBA Will Make 12-Credit Course Available Online

Wisconsin Builders Association® will record its presentation on April 8-9 of the "New Builder Education" session in Madison. This curriculum has been approved by the Department of Commerce for BOTH initial training and continuing education purposes. We will apply for a new course ID for an Internet version and then plan to make the 12-credit course available via CD or online. Watch for future announcements. Metropolitan Builders Association already offers a DVD version of the 12-credit class. For more information on this version, call 262-436-1122.

Please don't hesitate to call me at (800) 362-9066 ext. 18 with any questions.

Cindi Gruebling, Director of Safety and Education