

Building Construction Services – Dispelling the Rumors — 11/7/08

By Jim Evetts, Director, Building Construction Services

“Permits – I don’t need no permits!” is a cry I hear often as the Director of Building Construction Services and the Building Official for Charlotte County. I will fully admit that we have a reputation for requiring a permit and a licensed contractor for absolutely everything you want to do in Charlotte County. Therefore, I am going to try to dispel some of those rumors and answer some common questions.

No – you don’t need a permit, or a license, to blow your nose; and tents in the backyard for a kid’s campout are not going to need a contractor’s license to put up – or take down. We also don’t follow the garbage trucks looking for replacement water heaters that do not have permits. A history of all permits is available on line – as soon as it is applied for, and we generally don’t take more than seven to ten days to review a single-family home permit.

Because we do have regulatory responsibilities we take seriously, we will prosecute any person holding themselves out to be a contractor, without the required license, refuse to issue a permit to a contractor who does not carry the needed workers compensation or liability coverage and make sure all work being done on your property is fully compliant with all state, local and federal codes. Everything we do is open to scrutiny and we will gladly meet with you to answer any questions you have. If we do not have the answers, we will find out for you.

All joking aside, Charlotte County has a different type of reputation within Florida’s code enforcement circles. We are one of the toughest on contractors who do not do right by our citizens, we enforce the Florida Building Codes as they were written, and we have one of the best Flood Plain management programs in the State. We have a relationship with our local contractors association that is envied by many jurisdictions and I have just been appointed, by the Governor, to the State’s Construction Industry Licensing Board.

Charlotte County, along with the City’s of North Port and Venice, have recently had an issue of the global International Code Council News dedicated to the three jurisdictions for the innovative way we have developed to a program to share inspectors and plans reviewers across jurisdictional lines. This is a first among building departments and we hope it sets the standard for inter-jurisdictional cooperation across the country.

My department holds regular open houses to discuss issues that our citizens face and try to make us more approachable and I would like to invite you to attend. If there is anything you would like us to cover, let me know. You can contact me at jim.evetts@charlottefl.com or by phone at 941.743.1201.

Codes, building codes especially, are there to protect the owners and future owners of a structure, and the general public who are exposed to that structure. New codes come into effect when new developments in technology and information make old codes obsolete. Our building codebooks are updated every three years and are enforced throughout Florida. It is no more difficult, or easier, to build here than in Orlando, Tallahassee, Pensacola or Miami.

Codes are developed for a reason, and that reason is the life safety, health and welfare of the citizens of Charlotte County. A recent poster from the Building Officials Association of Florida illustrates our philosophy. It shows a firefighter, a police officer and a building inspector. The caption reads: “Different Jobs – Different Tools – Same Mission – Saving Lives!”