



Washington State Contractor License Requirements

Under State law, the City of Spokane is obliged to provide written notification regarding the contractor registration requirements set forth in RCW 18.27 and to advise homeowners of the risks associated with using an unregistered contractor.

Any contractor conducting business in the City of Spokane must be licensed by the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries and must have a city business license.

What Is the Purpose of Contractor Registration?

RCW 18.27.140 Purpose

It is the purpose of this chapter to afford protection to the public including all persons, firms, and corporations furnishing labor, materials, or equipment to a contractor from unreliable, fraudulent, financially irresponsible, or incompetent contractors.

What is a Contractor?

RCW 18.27.010 Definitions

(1)(a)(b)(c) "Contractor"

- a) "Contractor" includes any person, firm, corporation, or other entity who or which, in the pursuit of an independent business undertakes to, or offers to undertake, or submits a bid to, construct, alter, repair, add to, subtract from, improve, develop, move, wreck, or demolish any building, highway, road, railroad, excavation or other structure, project, development, or improvement attached to real estate or to do any part thereof including the installation of carpeting or other floor covering, the erection of scaffolding or other structures or works in connection therewith, the installation or repair of roofing or siding, performing tree removal services, or cabinet or similar installation; or, who, to do similar work upon his or her own property, employs members of more than one trade upon a single job or project or under a single building permit except as otherwise provided in this chapter.
- b) "Contractor" also includes a consultant acting as a general contractor.
- c) "Contractor" also includes any person, firm, corporation, or other entity covered by this subsection (1), whether or not registered as required under this chapter or who are otherwise required to be registered or licensed by law, who offer to sell their property without occupying or using the structures, projects, developments, or improvements for more than one year from the date the structure, project, development, or improvement was substantially completed or abandoned. A person, firm, corporation, or other entity is not a contractor under this subsection (1)(c) if the person, firm, corporation, or other entity contracts with a registered general contractor and does not superintend the work.

(2) "Unregistered contractor" means a person, firm, corporation, or other entity doing work as a contractor without being registered in compliance with this chapter. "Unregistered contractor" includes contractors whose registration is expired, revoked, or suspended. "Unregistered contractor" does not include a contractor who has maintained a valid bond and the insurance or assigned account required by RCW 18.27.050, and whose registration has lapsed for 30 or fewer days.



What are Contractor Registration Violations?

RCW 18.27.200 Violation – Infraction

(1) It is a violation of this chapter and an infraction for any contractor to:

- a) Advertise, offer to do work, submit a bid, or perform any work as a contractor without being registered as required by this chapter;
- b) Advertise, offer to do work, submit a bid, or perform any work as a contractor when the contractor's registration is suspended or revoked;
- c) Transfer a valid registration to an unregistered contractor or allow an unregistered contractor to work under a registration issued to another contractor;
- d) If the contractor is a [plumbing] contractor as defined in RCW 18.106.010, violate RCW 18.106.320; or
- e) Subcontract to, or use, an unregistered contractor.

(2) Each day that a contractor works without being registered as required by this chapter, works while the contractor's registration is suspended or revoked, or works under a registration issued to another contractor is a separate infraction. Each worksite at which a contractor works without being registered as required by this chapter, works while the contractor's registration is suspended or revoked, or works under a registration issued to another contractor is a separate infraction.

Contractor Exemptions Related to Property Owners

RCW 18.27.090 – Exemptions

The registration provisions of this chapter do not apply to:

(11) An owner who contracts for a project with a registered contractor, except that this exemption shall not deprive the owner of the protections of this chapter against registered and unregistered contractors. The exemption prescribed in this subsection does not apply to a person who performs the activities of a contractor for the purpose of leasing or selling improved property he or she has owned for less than twelve months;

(12) Any person working on his or her own property, whether occupied by him or her or not, and any person working on his or her personal residence, whether owned by him or her or not but this exemption shall not apply to any person who performs the activities of a contractor on his or her own property for the purpose of selling, demolishing, or leasing the property;

(13) An owner who performs maintenance, repair, and alteration work in or upon his or her own properties, or who uses his or her own employees to do such work;

What are The City Of Spokane's Responsibilities?

RCW 18.27.110 - Building Permits – Verification of registration required – Responsibilities of Issuing Entity

(1) No city, town or county shall issue a construction building permit for work which is to be done by any contractor required to be registered under this chapter without verification that such contractor is currently registered as required by law. When such verification is made, nothing contained in this section is intended to be, nor shall be construed to create, or form the basis for any liability under this chapter on the part of any city,



town or county, or its officers, employees or agents. However, failure to verify the contractor registration number results in liability to the city, town, or county to a penalty to be imposed according to *RCW 18.27.100(7)(a).

(2) At the time of issuing the building permit, all cities, towns, or counties are responsible for:

- a) Printing the contractor registration number on the building permit; and
- b) Providing a written notice to the building permit applicant informing them of contractor registration laws and the potential risk and monetary liability to the homeowner for using an unregistered contractor.

(3) If a building permit is obtained by an applicant or contractor who falsifies information to obtain an exemption provided under RCW 18.27.090, the building permit shall be forfeited.

What are the Risks Associated with Using an Unregistered Contractor?

A property owner that uses an unlicensed contractor will not be protected by the contractor's bond required by RCW 18.27.040. The \$30,000 general contractor and \$15,000 specialty contractor bonds are designed to:

- Pay all persons performing labor, including employee benefits, for the contractor;
- Pay all taxes and contributions due to the state of Washington;
- Pay all persons furnishing material or renting or supplying equipment to the contractor; and
- Pay all amounts that may be adjudged against the contractor by reason of breach of contract including improper work in the conduct of the contracting business.

The property owner's construction project may be delayed due to enforcement actions by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries or the City of Spokane caused by use of an unregistered contractor.

There may be other risks associated with use of unregistered contractors.

Verify a Contractor or Tradesperson

Use the [Verify a Contractor, Tradesperson or Business](#) tool to ensure you are working with a registered contractor who has a valid bond and insurance. This tool allows you to:

- Look up subcontractors and trades people
- Verify if the contractor has an active license.
- See if they have safety or construction citations.
- Find out if they have lawsuits against their bond.
- Confirm names of business owners.

You can also verify that the tradesperson performing electrical, plumbing, elevator installation, or manufactured home installations is certified (licensed) in Washington.

[Register as a contractor](#) with the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries.

For additional contractor licensing information, please contact the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries at 1-800-647-0982 or visit their website at <https://www.lni.wa.gov/>.

[Read the full text](#) of Chapter 18.27 RCW - Registration of Contractors.