

PRESS RELEASE

Why do I need a permit to install a water heater?

Building permits are required prior to the installation of a water heater in accordance with the Florida Building Code. Once a permit is issued, Building Division will inspect the water heater. There are several benefits associated with an inspection.

1. The County is responsible for assuring all plumbing products are in compliance with current codes and that they are installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
2. Water heaters come in a variety of styles and sizes and while it is almost impossible to **purchase** a new one that does not comply with the recognized standards that have been set in place for the manufacturing of these devices, **it is possible to install them improperly.**
3. Electric water heaters should be checked for proper wiring and clearance to combustibles.
4. Gas water heaters should be checked for proper venting, combustion air, gas pipe sizing, and clearance to combustibles.
5. All storage type water heaters, whether gas or electric, have what is called a "temperature and pressure relief valve (T&P Valve)" that is **required** to be installed. This valve limits the temperature to approximately 210 degrees F. and the pressure to approximately 150 psi. When you see water leaking or a dripping from the drain pipe on a T&P valve it is a clue that something is wrong. There may have been a spike in the incoming water pressure or the thermostat for the water heater may have malfunctioned briefly. Some people have been known to plug or cap this drain line and solve this problem. This is illegal and a dangerous fix has now created a larger problem. The water heater has been turned into a potential missile. If the thermostat continues to malfunction (fail in the on position and constantly heat the water in the storage tank) and there is no way to relieve the pressure created by the ever expanding water (due to constant heating and the fact that T&P valve is now plugged or capped) "something else" will have to give way. That "something else" is the water heater itself. There are many documented stories of water heaters that have been turned into missiles and have gone through floors and roofs of buildings and then traveled hundreds of feet through the air and landed hundreds of feet away

6. Inspectors check to determine if the drain line is not trapped. Trapping the drain line will have the same effect as plugging or capping it. That is, it will not allow the water to be released through it at its full capacity due to the fact that an obstruction has been created. The Florida Plumbing Code does not state this drain line needs to have a slope to it, however, the installation instructions for the T&P valve state that the drain line must pitch downward.
7. Other items inspected are the termination point of the T&P drain line which should be at least six (6) inches above finished grade and not more than twenty four (24) inches above finished grade. The intent of the six (6) inch minimum distance required from the end of the pipe to the ground or grade level is to assure the end of the potable relief valve discharge pipe will not be submerged or come in contact with any substance that could pollute or contaminate the potable water system. Also, we check to see if the end of the pipe is accidentally covered by landscaping. The intent of the twenty four (24) inch maximum distance required from the end of the pipe to the ground or grade level is to prevent a person who could be close to the pipe at the time of discharge from being burned.
8. Water heaters, whether gas or electric, installed in garages also need to be out of the way of the normal path of vehicles or behind barriers. They also need to have their ignition points (thermostats, heating elements, burners) raised to at least eighteen (18) inches above the garage floor.