



Residential Property Owner Scope of Work

Statute: ORS 479.540(1)(b)

Rule: OAR 918-261-0040

Date: Issued June 20, 2012
Updated April 30, 2013
Updated June 13, 2016

Subject: Scope of work that can be performed by Owner of Residential Property intended for rent, lease, sale, or exchange. Scope of work that can be performed by the owner's agent.

Question:

ORS 479.540(1) contains a licensing exemption for residential or farm property owners wishing to perform electrical work on their property. While the exemption for owners working on their own property is broad, the type of work an unlicensed owner is allowed to perform where a property is intended for rent lease sale or exchange is much narrower. Where it is an owner's agent performing the work the scope is narrower still. The division has received numerous questions on what work an unlicensed residential owner may perform and what work an unlicensed agent may perform.

1. What types of electrical installations can an owner of residential property intended for rent, lease, sale, or exchange perform without a license?
2. What types of electrical installations can an agent of an owner of residential property intended for rent, lease, sale, or exchange perform without a license?

Answer:

1. Where a residential property is intended for rent, lease sale or exchange, a license exemption exists allowing an unlicensed owner of residential property to perform limited electrical work on their, or an immediate family member's, property. Residential and farm owners can repair, replace or alter some parts of an existing electrical system on their (or an immediate family member's) property as required for maintenance.

Maintenance means work necessary to renew or repair a part of an existing electrical installation in order to maintain the existing system. The types of installations allowed include: replacing light switches, thermostats, and outlets (receptacles), light fixtures, door bells, communications devices, and ballasts.

Unlicensed owners of residential properties intended for rent, lease, sale, or exchange may not perform new electrical installations or substantial alterations to existing electrical installations.



Substantial alterations include work that can pose a significant life/safety risk if done improperly. For example, overcurrent devices, grounding electrode systems and associated conductors can pose a significant risk. For the same reason, replacing a service, including panels, sub-panels, meter bases, or breaker boxes is considered a substantial alteration and requires a licensed individual. New or extended circuits or feeders are outside the scope of the exemption for work necessary for maintaining the existing system.

2. The scope of work that can be performed by a landlord, or a landlord's agent, such as a property manager or real estate licensee, rather than the property owner, is narrowed even further. An unlicensed landlord or landlord's agent may replace an existing garbage disposal, dishwasher or electric hot water heater with a similar appliance of 30 amps or less because it is not a "substantial alteration." They may not perform other electrical work without at least a Limited Maintenance Specialty Contractor License.

Permits:

Permits protect by ensuring that electrical installations receive an inspection by an individual trained to spot safety issues. Where an unlicensed person is authorized to perform the work and is seeking a permit to perform the work themselves, jurisdictions should issue a permit to that person even if they are not an electrical contractor.

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