



Building Trade Association of Vermont

The Building Trade Association of Vermont is a non-profit organization of dedicated building trade professionals; General Contractors, Architects, Designers, Engineers, and other industry affiliated trades have come together with goal to improve safety and quality of both residential and commercial construction in Vermont.

Currently the state of Vermont does not have any contractor licensing or registration. It is the belief of BTAV we can work together to elevate the status of our building professionals while protecting consumer safety in the form of licensure or registration.

The Building Trade Association of Vermont is united to improve the quality of residential construction in Vermont through better consumer protection, better education, and better communication. Moreover, there is a breakdown in communication between the building Community and state regulators. While focused on consumer information, the proposed public database would also build a network to inform builders of code and statute changes.

BTAV also advocates for better enforcement of existing building codes in Vermont, at present the state has no organized registry to educate contractors on existing or changing legislation. Including;

- The Vermont Residential Building Energy Standard (RBES) - 30 V.S.A. § 51
- Regulated Essential Maintenance Practices (EMPs) or lead abatement
- Department of Fire Safety requirements for single family homes

- Regulated asbestos abatement activities
- Changes to accessibility codes
- Future adoption of IRC (International Residential Code)
- ◦BTAV is dedicated to statewide adoption of Building Codes. (Several Vermont cities currently enforce code requirements)

Feedback from Contractors and building professionals seeking additional goals:

- Leveling the playing field with insurance requirement, Workman's Comp and Liability Insurance.
- Differentiating between professional contractors and those that do not utilize current building code, energy and life safety standards.
- Registry where consumers can research a specific contractor's status with the state
- Safety programs for Contractors with more than 5 employees

Currently, BTAV Has outlined recommendations for registration tiers of Home Builders and associated trades in Vermont. These tiers are separated by specific criteria that necessitates oversight for consumer safety.

DRAFT January 5, 2018

- TIER 1 Handymen \$5,000 limit; no structure and no abatement Registration and proof of appropriate insurance.
- TIER 2 Professional Specialties No limit. Registration under a specific trade; some trades may require licensure or certification (*). No structural work. Trades could be added over time.
- Excavators Concrete
- Abators* (This is the only specialty that can perform abatement.)
- Electricians*
- Plumbers*
- HVAC*

- Insulators This trade often impacts structure. Assessment required?
 - Roofers
 - Siding
 - Painters (Int & Ext)
 - Floor layers/finishers
 - Tilers
 - Masons
 - Sheetrock/Tapers
 - Finish carpenters Includes millwork and cabinetry
 - CAPS* (Certified Aging in Place Specialist)
- TIER 3 Homebuilders/Remodelers No limit; this is the only group that can do structural work. Only registration and proof of insurance would be required, but State recognizes and lists voluntary certification. The list of recognized certifications may grow over time. To begin with: •VT RBES certification (Efficiency Vermont)
- Passive Haus Certified Builder (PHIUS)
 - Certified Green Professional (NAHB/USGBC)
 - Master Certified Green Professional (NAHB/USGBC)
 - Certified Graduate Remodeler (NAHB)
 - Certified Master Remodeler (NAHB)
 - Certified Graduate Builder (NAHB)
 - Certified Master Builder (NAHB)
 - Building Performance Institute Goldstar Contractor (BPI)

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Deficiency Examples:

1. Flashing Issue in Norwich, VT: The roof/wall intersection was not done properly. The exterior walls were so rotted on a roughly 20' x 20' addition that we were able to grab handfuls of exterior sheathing. We could have torn off the entire exterior with our hands.
2. Roof insulation/ventilation detail in South Royalton, VT: an entire roof was insulated with cellulose. It was not ventilated properly, and the vapor barrier was not adequate. The result was frost and moisture on the bottom side of the roof sheathing. The moisture was significant enough to cause the roof rafters to bow upwards. Over time, this would have rotted out the entire roof sheathing surface. We estimated around 106K of damage. Another outfit estimated 190K. This situation went to court. Agonizing and very frustrating for the owners.
3. Addition in Norwich, VT: An addition was partially built over a septic tank. The tank top settled, and the addition along with it...

Consumer Veronica Chen-Baker, 12 Parkside Drive Montpelier Vt

(ESL)

In a nutshell, the contractor, was a very dishonest, unscrupulous and an unqualified contractor, who had the nerves to call himself a General Contractor and taken the job as one at Montpelier Vt.

He lacked the ability and knowledge to attach an addition of 22' x 25' x 9' ht. to the original house. As a result, the basement of the main house was completely flooded and eventually infested by mold. To make matters worse, the new addition itself was not safely constructed. It was starting to spread its sides within a few months and the roof hadn't even been attached yet. The following contractor who took over the job, hired a structural engineer to guide them and prevented a potential disaster.

The initial contractor wasted an entire year of my time and funds amounting to \$268,000 just to their company. I had to pay the new builder to oversee the mold remediation process, remove all the mold infested walls, wires and all materials from the basement. What seemed like easy work for most carpenters.

I had a terrible experience emotionally and financially, but I was extremely fortunate to be able to afford the continuation of the construction. If it had happened to someone who had less resources, my home today be a construction dump. It would be a very interesting scenario, if I had just walked away after spending \$249,000 for the purchase + \$332,525.52 Pictures can be obtained through RSdesign of the deficiencies.

I bought this house as a home for my daughter who has serious mental illness. She then decided that she preferred Burlington over Montpelier. Since the house was purchased, I decided to keep the house for the rest of the family. As a mother of a seriously mentally ill daughter and handling everything all by myself in VT, I was so desperate and extremely scared about the situation with my daughter. The contractor I had initially hired pretended to be empathetic and managed to gain my confidence. Throughout the construction, I kept making excuses for him in my mind until I couldn't do it anymore on 10/4/16.

General Contractors must be licensed without a question. Permits for plumbing, electrical and building structures must be obtained. The original contractor had conducted himself honestly and worked very

hard to finish the job, I still would have an addition which would eventually collapse because the beams he used, were not sized correctly.

THE BARRE MONTPELIER TIMES ARGUS ONLINE

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Builder registry needed

Commentary

The Times Argus | January 25, 2018

Joseph BOUTIN

The secretary of state's Office of Professional Regulation is proposing mandatory registration of home-improvement and construction contractors for Vermont. This has been a long time coming and, in my opinion, desperately needed. The old Vermont saw farmers picking up a hammer in the winter months and being hired out as carpenters. The new Vermont sees anyone with a pickup truck who might be laid off from work go out and advertise as a carpenter. Many of the old Vermont farmhouses reflect the lack of expertise in their building skills, while it's an absolute pleasure to see a 200-year-old house build by craftsmen.

I have been in the construction field for 47 years, half in Vermont, the other years in different states and five different countries. I have worked under many state and cities building codes, as well as European Union and Norwegian building regulations. The craft of building and renovating residential structures has changed dramatically in my life as a builder — not just here in Vermont, but everywhere.

The new techniques and materials can make for an efficient, comfortable dwelling with minimal yearly maintenance. But if not constructed properly, a building can be a source of constant financial drain. Water infiltration, mold infiltration, rot both external and unseen, unhealthy air quality — these and many more circumstances are the responsibility of the person doing the work on the structure.

At this time, the public must seek out a contractor relying on word of mouth from a friend, maybe a reference, perhaps a website that claims to have vetted the contractor. After people have gotten burned, they are unusually nervous talking with or seeking out a contractor. In my case, I offer three recent references, testimonial from my clients, email

addresses of my clients so people can contact them directly and, in some cases, a site visit to past or present jobs. All in trying to have people feel secure in their hiring.

People who hire home contractors and residential remodelers should be assured that there are regulations and specifications that are being followed and have that backed up by some type of certification program. I believe the development of an educational system for those wishing to enter the field will follow, allowing for a trade where many can make a decent living. There is a segment of youth that either don't want to go to college, or can't. How easy is it for these ones to get into the trades? Not very easy in Vermont. It's time to make changes in Vermont with the educational process of becoming a carpenter. Regulating and certification will have that effect.

Imagine that person who is going to build your addition or renovate your living room has a certification that assures you of a level of expertise, gives you a certificate of insurance, has the financial backing to cover your work and a clean history of work projects. Sounds like a dream?

Joseph Boutin works for Master Carpentry in Sunderland.

Sports Roundup

The Times Argus is looking for a person to work late afternoons and early evenings up to 10 hours a week to take sports calls from local high school coaches and teams. This seasonal position requires writing and communication skills, and a basic understanding of high school sports.

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Vermont Community Media
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