



## Regulated Industries Complaints Office

235 S. Beretania Street, Ninth Floor

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

[cca.hawaii.gov/rico](http://cca.hawaii.gov/rico)

# HIRING ELECTRICIANS AND PLUMBERS

**Hire a Licensed Electrician.** According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), about 200 people die from electrocution each year. Deaths from residential fires run close to 700 annually. What can you do to limit the risk of injury or fire in your home? Consider hiring a licensed electrician to handle any electrical jobs you may have.



**Why insist on a licensed electrician?** Licensed electricians have the training and experience necessary to obtain a license. In order to even apply for a license, an applicant must have at least 5 years of supervised experience in the trade (over 10,000 hours), and 240 hours of academic coursework. All applicants must also pass a written examination that includes information on the National Electric Code.

**What's the difference between an electrical contractor and an electrician?** "Licensed electrical contractors" are people or companies that employ electricians. "Licensed electricians" are individual tradesmen with the training and experience to do the actual work. So, you may hire a licensed electrical contractor to rewire your house, but you should see licensed electricians doing the work. The same goes for plumbing contractors and plumbers.

**Building and electrical permits.** Licensed electrical contractors and electricians are able to apply for and obtain electrical permits. Permits are required for any electrical work that is greater than \$500 in a 12 month period. The permit requirement is waived for work less than \$500 in a 12 month period *if you hire a licensed electrician*. For information about building or electrical permits, contact the planning and permitting department for your county.

**When should I hire a licensed electrical contractor or electrician?** A license is required for any person who performs electrical work. Electrical work includes the installation, alteration, reconstruction, or repair of electrical wiring. If you have questions about whether you need to hire an electrical contractor or an electrician, call the Contractor's License Board at (808) 586-2700 or the Board of Electricians and Plumbers at (808) 586-2698.

Needs a License	Does not need a License
Install low voltage landscape lighting	Install solar powered landscape lighting
Install ceiling fans and light fixtures	Change the light bulbs in fixtures
Install or replace electric outlets and switches	Change the cover plates on outlets
Install or monitor alarms systems	Set up home theater components (excluding wiring)
Install computer network wiring	Set up wireless computer network

## Why consider hiring a licensee?

If you hire an unlicensed electrical or plumbing contractor, and work doesn't meet local building codes, or if the person doesn't pull the necessary permits (which an unlicensed contractor cannot do), as the homeowner, you'll be responsible if the project doesn't meet code. Additionally, allowing work to be done by an unlicensed person could affect your homeowner's insurance policy, should a claim arise as a result of that work. Your home is the single biggest investment you'll probably ever make, so take your time, do your homework, and consider hiring licensed electricians and plumbers.

*On job sites, look for licensed electricians and plumbers ...you'll be able to identify them by the license they're required to wear.*



**Hire a Licensed Plumber.** The costs of a plumbing leak are substantial and undetected or left untreated, can lead to mold and water damage to surrounding flooring and fixtures.



**Why insist on a licensed plumber?** Licensed plumbers have the training and experience necessary to obtain a license. In order to even apply for a license, an applicant must have at least 5 years of supervised experience in the trade (over 10,000 hours). The Board also requires all applicants pass a written examination that includes information about the Uniform Plumbing Code.

**Building and plumbing permits.** Licensed plumbing contractors and plumbers are also able to apply for and obtain plumbing permits. Permits are required for any plumbing work that is greater than \$500 in a 12-month period. The permit requirement is waived for work less than \$500 in a 12-month period if you hire a *licensed plumbing contractor*. For information about building or plumbing permits, contact the planning and permitting department for your county.

**When is a plumber's license required?** A license is required for any person who performs plumbing work. Plumbing work includes the installation, maintenance, extension, or alteration of piping, fixtures, appliances, and appurtenances.

Needs a License	Does not need a License
Install sinks and toilets	Unclog sinks and toilets
Install a kitchen disposal	Unclog a drain

If you have questions about whether you need to hire a plumbing contractor or a plumber, call the Contractor's License Board at (808) 586-2700 or the Board of Electricians and Plumbers at (808) 586-2698.

**If my project is only for minor repairs, can I hire a handyman or handyperson?** "Handymen" usually perform minor repairs and projects that are typically described as "odd jobs" or "fix-up tasks." The so called "handyman exemption" does not apply to electrical or plumbing work! Without an electrician's or a plumber's license, a handyman who does work that requires either an electrician's license or a plumber's license is engaged in unlicensed activity!

### How do I know a contractor, electrician or plumber is licensed?

The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) and its Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO) offer tools, tips, and services you can use to check out an individual or business, including:

- **Professional and Vocational license search:** Search for information about licensed contractors, electricians, and plumbers, including license status, license classifications, and proof of insurance.
- **RICO complaint history search:** Search for information about complaints filed against licensees and for information about unlicensed contracting investigations.

Checking out a licensee or business on these sites isn't a guarantee, but it's a good step to take that can help you to determine if the licensee or business is qualified to handle your particular job. It's also one of several steps you can take to protect yourself against unscrupulous or unqualified people.

Go to: [cca.hawaii.gov/rico/businesscheck](http://cca.hawaii.gov/rico/businesscheck).

*Unlicensed contracting and violations of Hawaii's licensing laws are investigated by RICO. To check licensing status or for information about hiring a licensed professional, call the Consumer Resource Center (CRC) at 587-4272 or visit the State's website at [cca.hawaii.gov/rico](http://cca.hawaii.gov/rico).*

For information about filing a complaint or to report unlicensed activity, call RICO's CRC at (808) 587-4272 or visit us online at [cca.hawaii.gov/rico](http://cca.hawaii.gov/rico). To call Oahu-RICO, dial the following toll free numbers: Kauai 274-3141, ext. 74272; Maui 984-2400, ext. 74272; Big Island 974-4000, ext. 74272; Molokai and Lanai 1-800-468-4644, ext. 74272, followed by the # sign.

*This brochure is for informational purposes only and not intended for the purposes of providing legal advice. Information provided is subject to change. Printed material can be made available for individuals with special needs in Braille, large print or audio tape. Submit requests to the RICO Complaints and Enforcement Officer at 586-2666.*

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