GUIDE · SIESTA BAY REMODEL AND HANDYMAN

Remodeling in Manatee and Sarasota Counties: Licenses, Permits and the 50 Percent Rule

By Jason Capozella | November 17, 2026

At a glance

- Painting, flooring, cabinets, countertops, tile and drywall need no state contractor license in Florida. Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, roofing and structural work do.
- The city your house sits in issues the permit, and each city keeps its own list of what needs one.
- In a flood zone, a job that reaches half the building's value can require the whole house to meet current flood rules.

Siesta Bay Remodel and Handyman works on homes in Bradenton, Anna Maria Island, Palmetto, Longboat Key and Sarasota. This is general information, not legal advice. The building department for your address has the final word.

Which remodeling jobs need a licensed contractor?

Florida Statutes section 489.117 lists work that needs no state license and bars cities and counties from requiring a local one for it. The list covers painting, flooring, cabinetry, tile, marble, granite and decorative stone, plastering, stucco, caulking, pressure washing, driveways and handyman services. Interior remodeling is on it too, as long as the project includes no task that needs a license.

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) gives its own examples: cabinets, countertops, paint, wallpaper, carpet, tile and window treatments. Its consumer brochure adds drywall and flooring.

Work on a home's systems or structure is licensed:

Job	State license needed?	Source
Painting, drywall, tile, flooring	No	Fla. Stat. 489.117; DBPR
Cabinets and countertops	No	DBPR FAQ
Any plumbing work, such as moving a sink	Yes	Fla. Stat. 489.105
Adding an outlet or a light fixture	Yes	DBPR electrical brochure
Changing a wall that carries load	Yes	Fla. Stat. 489.113
Roofing	Yes	Fla. Stat. 489.105

Florida also exempts small jobs under $2,500 (section 489.103). The exemption does not cover work that is part of a larger project or a job split up to stay under the line, and a state licensing board rule adds that work needing a building permit is not minor.

Who issues your permit?

City limits decide. If the house sits outside every city, the county issues the permit.

Where the house is	Who issues permits
Bradenton	City of Bradenton Building Division, 101 Old Main St
Unincorporated Manatee County	Manatee County
Palmetto	City of Palmetto Building Department
Anna Maria, Holmes Beach or Bradenton Beach	That city's own building department
Longboat Key, either county	Town of Longboat Key, 501 Bay Isles Rd
Sarasota	City of Sarasota Building Division, 1575 2nd St
Unincorporated Sarasota County	Sarasota County

Longboat Key is split between Manatee and Sarasota counties at the 4000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive, yet permits on both sides come from the Town.

Which jobs need a permit?

The lists differ by city. The City of Bradenton's post-storm FAQ says drywall repair needs no permit unless the wall is part of a fire-rated assembly, and new tile or other flooring needs none. Replacing wiring does. The City of Holmes Beach's permit guide, dated June 4, 2025, lists painting and floor coverings as exempt. The same guide says drywall, rotten wood replacement and kitchen or cabinet remodels need a building permit and a licensed contractor, but it exempts replacing cabinets like for like, with no other work, in single-family and duplex homes that do not hold a vacation rental certificate.

Since July 1, 2026, HB 803 lets the owner of a single-family home skip the permit for work valued at less than $7,500, after a written request for the exemption. It does not apply in a flood hazard

area or to electrical, plumbing, structural, mechanical or gas work. Our town-by-town permit guide covers each city.

The 50 percent rule

If your home is in a FEMA flood zone, repairs or improvements that reach half of the building's value (land not counted) require the whole building to meet current flood rules. Bradenton, Sarasota, Longboat Key and the island cities all enforce it, and each counts the value its own way. Our 50 percent rule explainer walks through how.

Historic homes and salt air

The City of Sarasota has about 180 locally designated historic buildings. Exterior changes to one of them need a Certificate of Appropriateness from the city's Historic Preservation Board, filed with the building permit.

Near the water, metal matters. FEMA's Technical Bulletin 8 says salt spray drops off within 300 to 3,000 feet of the shore, but faster corrosion has been found 5 to 10 miles inland. It recommends stainless steel or heavy hot-dip galvanized fasteners. Ask what screws and brackets are going into a deck, railing or exterior trim before the work starts.

Before you hire anyone

1. Ask which parts of the job need a license, using the table above.
2. Ask to see the state-issued license and look it up on DBPR's license search.
3. Ask for a certificate of insurance.
4. Ask who pulls the permit if one is needed.
5. In the City of Sarasota, ask whether the tradesperson is registered with the city. Painters and drywall trades must register before they work there.
6. Get the scope and the price in writing.

Working with Siesta Bay

Our work includes painting, drywall, tile, flooring, cabinets, countertops and backsplashes in Bradenton, Anna Maria Island, Palmetto, Longboat Key and Sarasota. Planning a kitchen? Start with a kitchen refresh without a remodel.

Call Jason Capozella at (941) 914-0802. We work in English and Spanish.

This article is for general information only and is not legal or professional advice. Always confirm requirements with the building department that has jurisdiction over your specific property.

Sources

Florida Statutes 2026, sections 489.103, 489.105, 489.113, 489.117 and 553.79, flsenate.gov. Florida Administrative Code Rule 61G4-12.011, flrules.org. DBPR construction FAQs and consumer brochures, myfloridalicense.com. City of Bradenton, "Storm Permitting FAQ" (December 2024), bradentonfl.gov. City of Holmes Beach, "Do I Need a Permit" (June 4, 2025), holmesbeachfl.org. Town of Longboat Key, longboatkey.org. City of Sarasota, historic preservation, sarasotafl.gov. Florida Senate, HB 803 (2026), flsenate.gov. FEMA, Technical Bulletin 8 (June 2019), fema.gov.