

# Thinking about a **REMODELING** Project?

## Hire a Licensed Contractor!

By Christine Fortenberry

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, for the first time in the history of our great state of Georgia, any construction work, whether a remodeling project or a new structure, residential or commercial, and which costs more than \$2500, must be performed by a state-licensed general contractor. This is a big step for Georgia. While this will not ensure the construction of projects with no mistakes, it has, for the first time, created a system of accountability for general contractors and remodeling contractors. For as long as I can remember plumbers, heating and air-conditioning contractors, electricians and low voltage contractors have been required to be "card carrying" licensed state contractors having passed the appropriate test of competency in their field of expertise. As ridiculous as it may sound, this has not been the case for the general contractors or remodeling

contractors for whom the subcontractors named above work for. The builder or remodeler who may have constructed your dream home or remodeling addition only had to have a business license not a contractor license! Are you shocked? It is most alarming to know that prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>; one of the largest investments in an individual's life may have been constructed or modified by a contractor with unchecked credentials if any!

The contractors and remodelers who have now received their state general contractor license have shown their proficiency in their field of expertise through both knowledge of the building code and a verified track record of performance and competency. Additionally, the licensed contractors and remodelers have met certain insurance requirements and must participate in continuing education yearly. Detailed information can be found on the secretary of state's website located at [www.secofstate.gov](http://www.secofstate.gov).

The license is issued to an agent who is an individual not a company and is required by all municipalities, as evidenced by the license number, for the issuance of a building or remodeling permit of any type whether residential or commercial. This license is either a residential, light commercial or commercial license and is held by and tied to the Social Security number of that individual not to the company. This link makes it impossible for a person to leave a trail of tears for poor performance only to change company or company name and repeat the poor performance again!

When considering your new home or renovation project, ask to see the license. The state Licensing Board issues a large framed version for the office and a pocket version to carry on one's person. Also ask for an insurance certificate



(not a copy) which covers both general liability and workman's compensation insurance. Ask for a final lien waiver at the completion of the project upon final payment for services rendered. State licensing of contractors has now given you the tools to make good informed choices about the persons and companies who will help you make your dream a reality.

Don't stop with the state license, which is now the minimum requirement, rather ask for other professional certifications issued by the NAHB (National Association of Home Builders), by the GAHBA (Greater Atlanta Home Builder's Association), by NARI (National Association of the Remodeling Industry), or by other organizations which will indicate the commitment of that individual to knowledge and continuing education on a professional level. The NAHB and the GAHBA organizations are comprised of both general contractors and remodeling contractors. Ask about any certifications that will indicate special knowledge in certain areas such as CAPS (Certified Aging in-Place Specialist) or Universal Design.

When considering your next project, take the time to choose a person who is qualified for the task just as you select the correct medical specialist for a health need, after all this is your home!

*Christine Fortenberry is a general contractor with CPHB, CGB and CAPS certifications*

