



March 2008

How do changes in the Contractor Registration laws affect residential landlords?

Generally, residential landlords/property owners are exempt from the Contractor Registration laws (RCW 18.27) unless they are buying and fixing up properties with the intent to sell them.

Examples of exemptions:

1. A landlord owns a duplex and rents it out. The landlord does a variety of work on the property to keep it up, some of which might be characterized as "maintenance, repair, and alteration," and some which might not (replacing a broken faucet or installing a new bathroom vanity or painting). The work is sometimes done between tenants so that the property remains marketable. Must the landlord become a registered contractor? **No.**
2. An owner of three apartment buildings hires staff to do maintenance work such as painting, minor repairs, etc., on the buildings. Does the maintenance staff need to be registered contractors? **No.**
3. You buy a small apartment building and plan to hire a registered general contractor to convert the five units into ten units to rent or lease. Do you need to be a registered contractor? **No.**
4. You purchase residential property and remodel or make improvements and then rent or lease it out. Do you need to be a registered contractor? **No.**
5. A homeowner wants to fix up and rent out a house she has been living in for three years. Does she have to be a registered contractor? **No.**
6. A landlord evicts a tenant who damaged the rental property. This is the last straw for the landlord, who then decides to fix up and sell the property. Must he be a registered contractor? **No, not if the property is a residential structure that he owned for more than 12 months.**
Exception: If the property is an apartment complex or other multi-unit structure and the landlord is going to fix up and sell the units as condominiums, then yes, contractor registration is required.