

*St. Louis County Department of Public Works
Division of Code Enforcement*

When is a Land Disturbance Permit required for Residential Projects?

LAND DISTURBANCE WORK

A Land Disturbance Permit is required for any clearing, rough grading (cutting and/or filling), excavating, finish grading, or any related work, which reshapes the ground surface or otherwise results in the removal and/or destruction of natural vegetation and/or results in the ground surface being exposed. For additional information refer to the Residential Guides on our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

The following work does not need a Land Disturbance Permit (see caution comment at end):

1. Any emergency activity in response to a natural disaster such as a flood or brush fire that is immediately necessary for the protection of life, property, or natural resources.
2. Existing farming, nursery and agricultural operations conducted as a permitted or accessory use.
3. Land disturbance activities involving less than thirty (30) cubic yards of earth/soil moved and less than 2000 square feet of disturbed area provided the Land Disturbance Activity is for the improvement of the property. Erosion and sediment control measures shall be provided when necessary, until grass or other vegetation is established.
4. Land disturbance activities associated with the construction of additions to and accessory structures for one- and two-family dwellings.
5. Removal of existing or dying grass or similar vegetation by disturbing not more than 10,000 square feet and re-sodding or re-seeding with new grass or landscaping to include preparation of the seed bed; provided erosion and sediment control measures are provided until the grass or other vegetation is established. Any cut or fill in conjunction with the preparation of the seedbed shall not exceed thirty (30) cubic yards.
6. Vegetable gardening and similar activities on property occupied by one- or two- family dwellings including installing shrubbery and flower beds, gold fish or lily pad pools, and similar residential landscaping type features.

Caution: It is a violation of the Land Disturbance Code to:

- a. do any cut or fill at the property line without County approval & a permit, or
- b. do any cut or fill that would permanently divert one drainage area to another, or
- c. do any cut or fill which would deposit mud or harmful silt, or create erosion or damage to adjoining properties, or
- d. do any cut or fill that would block or offset an existing swale or drainage path in a manner to cause damming and ponding, or
- e. do any cut or fill within a flood plain without a flood plain study & grading plan first being approved by the County and the work authorized by permit.

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When is a Building Permit required for Residential Projects?

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION WORK

A Building Permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish & replace, convert unfinished space to habitable rooms, or change the occupancy of a building or structure or to a portion of a building or structure

Some examples of typical residential construction projects that require a Building Permit are: new house construction, additions, fix-up/rehabilitation repair type projects, finishing basements, kitchen remodel, bath remodel, garages, carports, porches, decks, patio covers, barns, sheds, retaining walls, swimming pools, built-in backyard outdoor kitchens and fireplaces, antennas, flag poles, solar panel arrays, wind turbines, fire or storm damage repairs, etc. For additional information on permit requirements refer to the Residential Guides on our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

With respect to repairs, a Building Permit is required to repair a building or structure that has been damaged from termites, fire, wind, flood, or earthquake, regardless of the extent of the damage, as well as, to fix-up or rehabilitate a building that has not been maintained in good condition due to lack of on-going maintenance or neglect.

Residential building projects within unincorporated county & contracting municipalities that also include electrical, and/or plumbing, and/or mechanical work are issued as an Integrated Building Permit (one permit for the entire job). Electrical work must be done by a licensed Electrical Contractor or qualifying homeowner, plumbing work by a licensed Master Plumber or qualifying homeowner, and mechanical work by a licensed HVAC Servicer-Installer Contractor or qualifying homeowner.

The following types of work are considered ordinary repairs or minor work for which a Building Permit will not be required, provided such ordinary repairs are regularly performed as on-going continued maintenance for the purpose of maintaining the building in good condition:

1. Tuckpointing, patching holes in plaster and drywall, replacing a cut-out section of drywall associated with a repair or replacement of a plumbing pipe or other utility located within the concealed area, painting (interior and exterior), floor sanding and refinishing, installing floor tile and/or carpeting, replacing finish flooring with like material, application of wall paper (and other similar wall covering material), and replacing cabinet units and/or countertops or a vanity of the same general size in the same location. (Note:

Replacing/installing drywall on new or existing room walls, bulkheads, soffits, or ceilings requires a building permit. A plumbing permit is required to replace/reset sinks & water closets and to install dishwashers associated with replacing countertops and/or cabinets or vanities. Reconfiguring kitchen cabinet & bathroom layouts will likely trigger changes to the plumbing piping and code required electrical receptacle locations, as well as, plumbing & electrical permits for the required installations).

2. Repair or replacement of existing gutters and above-grade portions of downspouts.
3. Application of pre-finished aluminum or steel (or other like materials) on existing soffits, fascia boards, overhangs, porch columns & beams, etc.
4. Replacement of existing windows within existing rough openings provided the new windows a) are the manufacturer's largest standard size window that will fit within the existing opening and are of the same operating style as the existing window or of a style that provides for an equal or greater window opening area than the existing window, b) have a maximum U-Factor of 0.40, and c) meets safety glazing requirements when applicable; repair of existing windows sash and frames within existing rough openings; installation of storm windows and storm doors; glazing and glass replacement within existing frames provided the installation of replacement glass meets the safety glazing requirements for new installations when applicable; (Note: a building permit is required to enlarge or modify existing rough openings or to replace a window with a style that provides a smaller opening area than the existing window).
5. Replacement of exterior doors within existing rough openings provided the new exterior doors have a maximum U-Factor of 0.40; replacement of interior doors and/or door frames within existing rough openings provided the replacement of any door from the house to a garage is at least a 1 3/8" solid wood door, 1 3/8" solid or honeycomb core steel door, or 20 minute fire rated door; repair of exterior and/or interior doors and/or door frames; (Note: a building permit is required to enlarge or modify existing rough openings).
6. On-grade exterior sidewalks, ramps, stairs and/or steps that meet all of the following:
 - a. supported on-grade for their entire area, and
 - b. are not more than 12 inches above grade, and
 - c. are not structurally attached to the house or another structure, and
 - d. are within the property lines.

Note: A Special Use Permit is required from County Highways & Traffic for any sidewalks, ramps, or steps located within their right-of-way.

7. On-grade driveways & parking area within the property lines not more than 12 inches above grade (Note: A Special Use Permit is required from County Highways & Traffic for any driveway work beyond the curb and within their right-of-way).
8. On-grade paved areas for activities related to single-family residential usage (such as a concrete patio, shooting area for a basketball goal, etc), not more than 12 inches above grade, on the same lot as the primary structure, and without roofs, covers or enclosures.
9. Wheelchair ramps (including landings) constructed of wood or similar materials providing access to a private residence that meet all of the following:
 - a. footprint area does not exceed 120 square feet and the ramp and landing floor surfaces do not exceed 30 inches above adjacent grade, and

- b. rest directly on and/or are supported by the existing grade, sidewalk, patio, porch steps and/or porch, with no separate foundations, and
- c. are not structurally attached to the house, and
- d. any portion of the ramp or landing that is more than 12 inches above grade is located behind the front and side yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance.

It is intended that these ramps could and would be easily removed when they are no longer needed. A building permit is required for wheelchair ramps and landings that, regardless of size, are structurally attached to and supported by the house on one or more sides (similar to typical deck construction) and/or are erected on a foundation system.

10. Wood patios/platforms which rest directly on the ground or a rock base, provided they are not covered by a roof or canopy, are not supported by any type of permanent foundation, and are a maximum of 12 inches above the finished grade.
11. Some retaining walls up to 3 feet in height that do not support a surcharge load and are not located in close proximity to a property line (see Residential Retaining Wall Brochure for specifics on when a permit is required). Small walls exempted from permit and associated grading shall not create a change in property elevation along property lines, block drainage or create erosion or damage to adjacent properties (see document titled "When is a Land Disturbance Permit required for Residential Projects").
12. Fixed or retractable awnings installed on windows & doors which do not project more than 54" from the exterior wall and do not project into the front yard setback* as required by the County Zoning Ordinance.
13. Wall paneling & wallpaper of any type when applied to existing residential room wall surfaces.
14. Ceiling tile of any type, other than foam plastic, when applied to existing residential ceiling surfaces. Replacement of damaged lay-in ceiling panels of like materials up to 25% of a room/space and a maximum of 500 square feet;
15. Installation of battery operated smoke detectors within existing dwellings/dwelling units.
16. Small detached accessory building/structures used as tool or storage sheds, cabanas, play houses, and similar uses which are 120 square feet or less in area and less than 10 feet in height (measured to the mid-point of a sloped roof) provided the structure maintains the front yard setback* requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: This does not include small accessory buildings or built-in structures having unique uses such as outdoor fireplaces, outdoor kitchens & BBQ's and/or smoke houses, storage of fuel or other hazardous materials above normal household quantities, the presence of fuel fired appliances or equipment, and other similar uses that if not properly located and/or installed may present an increased fire hazard. A building permit is required for all buildings/structures housing these types of uses regardless of size. A building permit is also required for the installation of ground or roof mounted solar panel arrays of any height/area).
17. Residential detached accessory structures such as; clothes poles, small garden trellises or arbors, and other similar minor structures, provided such accessory structures maintain the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: A building

permit is required for any detached trellis or arbor that exceeds 120 square feet in area or 10 feet or more in height).

18. Basketball goals and standards.
19. Standard size manufactured backyard playground equipment for residential property provided such equipment maintains the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: This does not include large unique or unusual structures such as playhouses exceeding 120 square feet in area or 10 feet in height, skateboard ramps, batting cages, etc. A permit is required for these types of structures).
20. Swimming pools having a wall height less than 26 inches & a water depth less than 24 inches that are installed entirely above ground and hot tubs & spas placed on a slab-on-grade, provided such structures maintain the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: All other swimming pools including inflatable pools, hot tubs, & spas require a building permit).
21. Small goldfish pools, lily pad pools and other similar residential water landscaping type features not intended for bathing purposes, provided such features maintain the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance and the associated grading, etc. to create the pool does not create a change in property elevation along property lines, block drainage or create erosion or damage to adjacent properties (see document titled "When is a Land Disturbance Permit required for Residential Projects"). (Note: Some retaining walls require a building permit, see Item 10 above).
22. Roof covering replacement for roof slopes of 4:12 or more when done with a like material. Replacement of 25% or less of the roof sheathing with like material. (Note: A building permit is required to shingle or install other roof coverings on roof slopes less than 4:12 and on roof slopes of 4:12 or more when re-roofing with different materials).
23. New or replaced exterior siding (vinyl, metal, wood, hardboard, etc.) including replacing with a different type of siding.
24. New fencing or replacement of existing fencing (except when enclosing swimming pools, spas, or hot tubs) in the rear or side yards provided the fence is no more than 6 feet in height. Fencing on a corner cannot be located within the County Zoning Ordinance site distance triangle (Note: A building permit is required for fences around swimming pools, spas, or hot tubs, and for all fences more than 6 feet in height).
25. Flag poles, radio or television antennas, weather vanes with small decorative ornaments, and similar structures 12 feet or less in height, mounted on the ground, attached to or on the roof of a building. Dish antennas 2 feet in diameter or less installed on grade, to the house wall or on the roof. All flag poles, antennas, weather vanes, and similar structures must maintain the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: A building permit is required to install a wind turbine or similar energy generating device of any height).
26. Minor cosmetic repairs (including minor smoke/fire damage, termite, wind, etc.) to a building when the building official verifies that the work is of a minor cosmetic nature and there is no structural damage or change to any part of the building structure. A field inspection is required in advance to determine the nature of the repair and if a permit is required.

27. Resealing existing driveways and paved parking areas.
28. Temporary tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes such as a homeowner's children's weekend campout in the backyard.
29. Small statues that can be placed on grade without needing a foundation support, and not attached to or part of a building or structure, provided such statues maintain the front yard setback* required by the County Zoning Ordinance.
30. Foundation and floor slab repair such as patching/filling of cracks (up to 1/4 inch in walls and 3/8 inch in slabs), waterproofing basements, etc., including underpinning of slabs and foundation wall, provided the existing building is otherwise structurally sound; (Note: Removing and replacing a segment of the footing and/or foundation wall requires a building permit).
31. Relining, repairing, patching and/or shotcreting existing swimming pool walls/floors, provided required minimum water depths under diving boards (if present) are maintained.
32. Repairing or replacing door or window hardware including springs, locks and latches.
33. On existing interior stairs, landings, and/or elevated floors: Repairing or replacing handrails, tread, and/or riser finish boards, and/or up to 50% of the components (balusters or rails) that comprise the guard with like materials. (Note: a building permit is required to repair or replace more than 50% of the guard components (balusters or rails), to replace the guard along an existing interior stair, stair run, or elevated floor, and/or to replace an entire interior stair or stair run).
34. On existing exterior decks, porches, and/or stairs: Repairing or replacing up to 50% of the existing finish decking material with like material; repairing or replacing up to 50% of the components (balusters, rails, or support posts) that comprise the guard and/or replacing up to 50% of the entire linear length of the guard with like materials, and/or repairing or replacing stair handrails, tread, and/or riser finish boards with like materials. (Note: a building permit is required to replace a deck or porch; to replace deck/porch joists, beams, headers, ledger boards, and/or columns; to replace the finish decking, guard, and/or stair treads with a different material such as replacing wood with plastic or composite products; to repair or replace more than 50% of the finish decking with like material; to repair or replace more than 50% of the components (balusters, rails, or support posts) that comprise the guard, or to replace more than 50% of the entire linear length of the guard with like materials**; and/or to replace an entire exterior stair or stair run)
 - ** When replacing more than 50% of the length of the guard, or when replacing a substantial percentage of the components that comprise the guard, the entire guard shall be made to comply with current code requirements which may require a different guardrail design and/or materials.
35. Increasing attic insulation or installing exterior wall insulation under new/replacement siding. (Note: a building permit is required to install insulation, furring strips, & drywall on the room side or interior basement side of exterior walls).

*Caution: Usually houses in Unincorporated County are constructed on or close to the front yard setback line, thus there are very few lots where there would be sufficient space available

to place a structure between the minimum front yard setback line and the house itself. Except for large wide lots a similar situation occurs with respect to the side yard setback. If located in a Municipality that contracts with the County for code enforcement contract the Municipal Zoning Official regarding setback requirements.

Listing of work exempt from a building permit was originally consolidated from individual departmental policies and released 06/01/98;
Revised/Updated 12/01/02 & 06/01/06. Document reformatted as "When is a Building Permit Required" and issued 3/22/10;
Revised/Updated 07/26/11, 04/19/13, 05/07/13, 9/20/13, 10/01/13, 01/02/14, 02/07/14, 05/01/14, 04/14/16.

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When is an Electrical Permit required for Residential Projects?

ELECTRICAL WORK

An Electrical Permit is required to install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace equipment, panels, material, wiring, fixtures or any other component of an electrical system.

Some examples of typical residential electrical projects that require an Electrical Permit are: new house construction, fix-up/rehabilitation repair type projects, enlarging or renovating a house, remodeling kitchens or bathrooms, finishing basements, replacing the service entrance, replacing/enlarging distribution/breaker panels, adding new circuits, adding new wiring/fixtures to existing circuits, installing a swimming pool, installing electric to an accessory structure or backyard outdoor kitchen, electrical solar array panels, etc. For additional information on permit requirements refer to the Residential Guides on our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

With respect to repairs, an Electrical Permit is required to repair the electrical system in a building or structure that has been damaged from fire, flood, or severe wind; and as part of a fix-up/rehabilitation building project, to repair or replace components of a electrical system that have not been maintained in good condition due to lack of on-going maintenance or neglect.

Residential building projects within unincorporated county & contracting municipalities that include electrical work are issued as an Integrated Building Permit (one permit for the entire job). Electrical work must be done by a licensed Electrical Contractor or qualifying homeowner.

The following types of work are considered ordinary repairs or minor work for which an Electrical Permit will not be required, provided such ordinary repairs are regularly performed as on-going continued maintenance for the purpose of maintaining the building's electrical system in good condition:

1. Replacing defective fuses, switches, receptacles, light fixtures and changing/replacing existing receptacles with GFCI type receptacles within existing pre-wired boxes (Reconfiguring kitchen cabinet & bathroom layouts will likely trigger code required changes to electrical receptacle locations and associated new wiring. An electrical permit is required to install new wiring);

2. Replacing defective garbage disposals, dishwashers, kitchen & bathroom exhaust fans like-for-like in the same location provided they can be re-connected to existing wiring without modifications. (Caution: While no electrical permit is required, a plumbing permit is required to replace a dishwasher);
3. Installing a ceiling fan at an existing light outlet location provided the existing box is replaced by an approved box for fan installations and is securely anchored to the ceiling framing above. (Note: New wiring requires an electrical permit.);
4. Installing a low voltage communication system, security/alarm system, or other low voltage wiring within existing one & two family dwellings;
5. Installing or replacing landscape lighting plugged into an existing approved exterior outlet or powered by the sun.

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When is a Plumbing Permit required for Residential Projects?

PLUMBING WORK

A Plumbing Permit is required to install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace equipment, potable water supply and distribution piping, fixtures & traps, drainage & vent pipes, building drains and sewers including laterals, including their respective joints and connection, devices, receptors, and appurtenances or any other component of a plumbing system.

Some examples of typical residential plumbing projects that require a Plumbing Permit are: new house construction, fix-up/rehabilitation repair type projects, plumbing work associated with remodeling, renovating or enlarging a house, resetting/relocating plumbing fixtures associated with remodeling kitchens or bathrooms, installing bathrooms, bar sinks, or other plumbing associated with finishing basements, repairing or replacing the water distribution piping, building drain/waste piping, or vent system, replacing a water heater, installing or replacing a backflow device for a lawn irrigation system, etc. While a permit is not required to replace a dishwasher, the licensed plumber is required to attach a permanent tag on the dishwasher and submit a Certificate of Replacement to the County. For additional information on permit requirements refer to the Residential Guides on our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

With respect to repairs, a Plumbing Permit is required to repair the plumbing system in a building or structure that has been damaged from fire, flood, or severe wind; and as part of a fix-up/rehabilitation building project, to repair or replace plumbing fixtures and/or components of a plumbing system that have not been maintained in good condition due to lack of on-going maintenance or neglect.

Residential building projects within unincorporated county & contracting municipalities that include plumbing work are issued as an Integrated Building Permit (one permit for the entire job). Plumbing work must be done by a licensed Master Plumber or qualifying homeowner.

The following types of work are considered minor ordinary repairs or minor work for which a Plumbing Permit will not be required; provided such ordinary repairs are regularly performed as on-going continued maintenance for the purpose of maintaining the building's plumbing system in good condition:

1. Minor repairs within the interior of any building to leaks in drains, pipes, traps and valves, opening waste or supply pipes, and traps or drains. (Note: Minor repairs shall not be construed to include any work involving connections to or replacement or rearrangement of soil pipes, supply pipes, waste pipes, vent pipes or inside rain leader pipes, or the replacing or setting of any fixture, or replacement or repairs to Backflow Prevention Devices, pressure reducing or regulating valves. A permit is required for this kind of repair work.);
2. Replacing internal components within a water closet tank such as a defective flush valve, float, stopper/flapper, replacing internal components such as washers on a faucet or hose bib, replacing defective TPR valves on water heaters, and replacing treaded hose bibs;
3. Replacing a kitchen or bathroom faucet or garbage disposal in the same location provided no additional repair work is required beyond the fixture tubing connections or disposal waste connections. (Note: A plumbing permit is required to replace and/or reset fixtures such as kitchen sinks, water closets, bathroom sinks, tubs, or showers, or to replace/install dishwashers as part of simple kitchen & bathroom remodels, as well as, to extend/modify the water supply piping and/or trap arm & waste/drain piping to accommodate reconfigured kitchen cabinet or bathroom layouts on more complex kitchen or bathroom remodels, etc.);
4. Installing a lawn irrigation system beyond the required backflow device (Note: A plumbing permit is required for the installation of the required backflow device).

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When is a Mechanical Permit required for Residential Projects?

MECHANICAL WORK

A Mechanical Permit is required to install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace appliances, equipment, ductwork, or any other component of a mechanical system.

Some examples of typical residential mechanical projects that require a Mechanical Permit are: new house construction, fix-up/rehabilitation repair type projects, installing/replacing heating & air conditioning equipment associated with enlarging or renovating a house or finishing basements, replacing existing furnaces and/or air conditioning units, adding new ductwork, replacing or rerouting ductwork, installing kitchen hoods &/or fans associated with remodeling kitchens, installing pre-fab fireplaces, gas logs &/or gas log lighters, installing wood burning stoves, installing outdoor gas grills or outdoor gas kitchen appliances, gas lights, installing/replacing gas piping, etc. For additional information on permit requirements refer to the Residential Guides on our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

With respect to repairs, a Mechanical Permit is required to repair mechanical equipment & components of a HVAC system in a building or structure that has been damaged from fire, flood, or severe wind; and as part of a fix-up/rehabilitation building project, to repair or replace mechanical equipment and/or components of a HVAC system that have not been maintained in good condition due to lack of on-going maintenance or neglect.

Residential building projects within unincorporated county & contracting municipalities that include mechanical work are issued as an Integrated Building Permit (one permit for the entire job). Mechanical work must be done by a licensed HVAC Servicer-Installer Contractor or qualifying homeowner.

The following types of work shall be considered as ordinary repairs or minor work for which a Mechanical Permit will not be required, provided such ordinary repairs are regularly performed as on-going continued maintenance for the purpose of maintaining the building's mechanical equipment and HVAC system in good condition:

1. Installing, replacing, or repairing portable heating appliances, portable ventilation appliances and equipment, portable cooling units, portable evaporative coolers, and portable fuel cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid;

2. Installing, replacing, or repairing self-contained refrigeration systems that contain 10 pound (4.5 kg) or less of refrigerant, or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (0.75 kw) or less.
3. Ordinary repairs for the purpose of maintenance and service such as the repair or replacement of any minor part of a piece of equipment that does not alter the approval of the equipment, the replacement of piping within heating or cooling equipment, replacement of leaking or defective valves, fittings or connections of system components, changing of belts, parts, filters and lubrication of equipment, recharging, testing and balancing of equipment and similar service work. This includes the replacement of the compressor or compressor motor, evaporator coil, refrigerant line dryer/accumulator, fan/blower motor or housing, and heat exchanger; repair or replacement of 10 feet or less of gas line or ductwork, gas shut-off valve, parts internal to the condensing unit or furnace, and controls such as the thermostat; and recharging refrigerant . (Note: All other repairs and replacements to mechanical systems and equipment requires a permit including, but not limited to, replacement of the condensing or heat pump unit, furnace, boiler, flue pipe or liner, radiant heating system, and ground source heat pump unit and/or piping.);
4. Replacing existing residential kitchen hoods, kitchen & bathroom exhaust fans and associated ductwork provided they are of the same nominal capacity, same type and in same location. (Note: A permit is required for new installations of residential kitchen hoods and kitchen & bath exhaust fans including associated ductwork.);
5. Replacing like-for-like gas stoves, gas dryers, decorative gas log appliances (within existing masonry fireplaces or pre-fab fireplaces listed for gas log inserts), gas-fired lighters, and permanent residential outside gas grills, outdoor gaslights, and similar gas appliances. (Note: A permit is required for new installation of these kind of gas appliances and associated gas supply lines);
6. Replacing floor, wall & ceiling registers, grills, and diffuser covers;
7. Replacing vent connectors. (Note: A permit is required to replace the flue or chimney or to install a liner system to resize an existing flue or chimney);
8. Replacing dryer exhaust duct/pipe in the same location. Installing or replacing the transition duct connector between the dryer and the exhaust duct system.
9. Adding an air cleaner or humidifier to an existing furnace.