

# Plumbers and Gas Fitters Consumer Fact Sheet

## Board of State Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters

The Board of Registration of Plumbers and Gas Fitters regulates these occupations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in accordance with the state laws and Board regulations. The Board promulgates the uniform state plumbing and gas fitting codes. It holds examinations and issues licenses for Journeyman and Master Plumbers, Journeyman and Master Gas Fitters, and Liquefied Petroleum Gas Installers (LP) and Limited Liquefied Petroleum Gas Installers (LTD). It registers apprentice Plumbers and Gas Fitters and issues corporate and partnership certificates for plumbing and gas. The Board holds public hearings for code amendments, grants variances, and approves dual and elevated gases and plumbing and gas products.

The Board consists of nine volunteer members including master and journeyman plumbers, master and journeyman gas fitters, representatives from the Department of Public Health and the Department of Public Safety, a sanitary engineer, a liquefied petroleum gas installer, and a public member.

---

## Licensed Plumbers

Plumbers work with materials and fixtures used in the installation, removal, maintenance, extension and alteration of plumbing systems. A plumbing system includes the water supply and distribution pipes; plumbing fixtures and traps; soil, waste, and vent pipes; and building sanitary and storm drains including the connections with any point of disposal (public or private) within the property line.

Only a master or journeyman plumber examined and licensed by the Board of State Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters, with the proper permits issued by the local plumbing inspector, can perform plumbing work at your home or business.

Any person licensed as a master or journeyman plumber may perform the work of a gas fitter, but a licensed master or journeyman gas fitter may not carry out the work of a plumber.

A **master plumber** has worked for a minimum of one year as a journeyman, completed 100 hours of advanced plumbing theory, and successfully passed the master plumber examination. A master plumber may work either as an individual, a firm, or a corporation. A master plumber must maintain a regular place of business where the current license is displayed. The master plumber may employ journeymen and apprentices.

A **journeyman plumber** has worked for three years as an apprentice, completed 300 hours of theory at an institution approved by the Department of Education and the Board of State Examiners and successfully passed the

journeyman examination. A journeyman works as an individual in performing plumbing work. State regulations require that a journeyman carry a license and display it upon request.

An **apprentice plumber** is a person learning the trade who is registered with the Board and works under the direct supervision of a master or journeyman plumber.

---

## Licensed Gas Fitters

Gas fitters pipe fuel gases, low pressure or elevated, to appliances and accessories and install vent piping for flue gases and makeup air.

A **master gas fitter** must have held a journeyman gas fitter's license for at least one year and successfully passed the master gas fitter examination. A master gas fitter may work either as an individual, a firm, or a corporation. A master gas fitter must maintain a regular place of business where the current license is displayed. The master gas fitter may employ journeymen and apprentices.

A **journeyman gas fitter** must have worked for at least two years as an apprentice, completed 150 hours of study in gas fitting theory at educational institution approved by the Department of Education and the Board of State Examiners, and successfully passed the journeyman gas fitter examination. A journeyman works as an individual in performing gas fitting work. State regulations require that a journeyman carry a license and display it upon request.

An **apprentice gas fitter** is a person learning the trade who is registered with the Board and works under the direct supervision of a master or journeyman plumber or gas fitter.

---

## Permits

The local plumbing inspector must issue a permit before any plumbing can be installed, altered, removed, replaced, or repaired. Permits for performing plumbing work are issued only to licensed plumbers.

A permit is not required for minor repairs such as fixing a leaky faucet, valve or other working part of a plumbing fixture, or for clearing a blocked drain.

However, these minor repairs do not include replacing or relocating a faucet, valve or other working part of a plumbing fixture, or water supply, sewer, drainage, soil, waste, vent or similar piping, or any work which may affect the public health.

Massachusetts law prohibits any one but a licensed professional from installing, removing or repairing plumbing. The reasons for this may not, at first, be obvious, but public safety is of primary importance. Inadvertent cross-connections can create backflow problems which jeopardize the safety of public water supplies. Improperly installed parts, such as temperature and pressure relief valves, can result in serious explosions and injuries. These are just two examples of possible consequences when plumbing work is performed by untrained and inexperienced persons.

---

## **Consumer Tips for Choosing a Plumber or Gas Fitter**

- Hire a licensed professional. Call the Board of State Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters at 617-727-9952 to verify licensure, the number of years licensed, and the licensee's disciplinary history. Or, do your own verification on the internet at our [web site](#).

A master or journeyman plumber's or gas fitter's license type and number must be shown on any sign, listing, or advertisement.

- When applying for a permit, a licensed plumber or gas fitter must sign, under the penalties of perjury, that s/he carries liability insurance, or that person must present a waiver of insurance signed by you, the homeowner. To prevent problems down the line, be sure the plumber or gas fitter carries liability insurance.
  - Get at least three estimates for your job. Competition promotes fairness.
  - Call several companies. Get referrals from friends, family or neighbors. Contact a trade association for a list of member companies in your area.
  - Agree in writing to the scope and price of the work to be completed.
  - The agreement should list all work to be performed, the type of materials to be used, rough and finish completion dates, permitting and inspections, and the type of warranty on materials and workmanship.
  - Payment should be made on a percentage basis, based on the total amount of work to be performed, as the work progresses.
  - Ask to see the permit. This permit is your guarantee that the work will be inspected and that the professional is responsible for the work performed.
- 

## **Filing a Complaint**

While the majority of licensees conduct themselves as true professionals, the Division of Professional Licensure will take action against those who fail to maintain acceptable standards of competence and integrity.

In many cases, complaints are made by dissatisfied consumers - but, dissatisfaction alone is not proof of incompetence or sufficient grounds for disciplinary action. Cases are evaluated on the basis of evidence. The more written evidence presented, the stronger the complaint.

If you have a serious complaint against a licensed plumber or gas fitter, call or write the Division's Office of Investigations and ask for a complaint form.

Or download a copy of the [complaint form](#)  .

Division of Professional Licensure  
Office of Investigations  
1000 Washington Street, Suite 710  
Boston, Mass. 02118  
(617) 727-7406

---

## **Trade Associations**

### **Mass. Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association**

178 Forbes Road Suite 218  
Braintree, MA 02184-2610  
(781) 843-3800

### **Greater Boston Association of Plumbers, Heating and Cooling Contractors**

520 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02215  
(617) 247-3870