

NORTH HEMPSTEAD TOWN

Tightening the rules

Comprehensive code change clamps down on sharing of plumbers' licenses

BY KRISTOPHER J. BROOKS
kristopher.brooks@newsday.com

North Hempstead's building department can now revoke a plumber's license if its inspectors find that a plumber has illegally shared their license with someone else.

A recently passed amendment to the town's enforcement code explains when and how plumbers could lose their license. North Hempstead Town council members approved the amendment on June 5, drawing praise from the local plumbers union.

"The sharing of licenses, or covering licenses, has been going on forever and everywhere, and finally the tide has turned," said Art Gipson, business agent for U.A. Plumbers Local Union No. 200, which represents 1,200 plumbers in Suffolk and Nassau counties.

North Hempstead's building department grants licenses so plumbers can do work with the town. To obtain a license, an applicant must have spent at least five years as a journeyman plumber and be able to pass a written and hands-on exam.

Under the amendment, a three-person board of master plumbers will review license renewals and new license applications. The board will also oversee the process of revoking a license if someone violates one of the seven new rules.

A license can be suspended or revoked, for example, if no permit application is filed to do the plumbing work, if the person doing the work is a convicted felon, or if an already licensed plumber lends their license to a third party.

The building department commissioner can suspend a license for up to one year.

"Up until now, there was really no mechanism of enforcement to pull someone's license," said Glenn Norjen,



A licensed master plumber at work. The amendment drew praise from the local plumbers union.

MISUSE IT & LOSE IT

Seven is not a lucky number within the North Hempstead Building Department for plumbers who allow others to use their license. It can be revoked or suspended for the following reasons:

- Failure to file an application for a permit prior to the installation of plumbing work
- Failure to take the required action called for upon receipt of a violation notice
- Performing plumbing work in violation of requirements in town law
- Renting or lending a license to a third party
- Being a convicted felon
- Altering or defacing a certificate of inspection or approval
- Filing an application to perform plumbing work for a person not licensed by the Town of North Hempstead

North Hempstead deputy building commissioner. "If you go to the DMV, they have mechanisms to suspend your driver's license. The building [department] had no say at all."

The town grants about 10 new plumbing licenses and re-

news about 165 licenses per year, Norjen said.

Gipson spoke in favor of the amendment, calling its passage "a bold move" and specifically praising the amendment's lending license rule.

Gipson said license covering

is a widespread problem on Long Island that he has been trying to combat for a decade. He noted that the Town of Hempstead, which has 760 licensed plumbers, passed legislation in April that prohibits sharing licenses. Plumbers found violating the Hempstead law could receive civil penalties of at least \$3,000 per violation. Gipson said he is working to get similar measures passed in Babylon, Oyster Bay, Riverhead and Brookhaven towns.

North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said the amendment protects residents because it ensures they are getting work done by "plumbers that are licensed and their work is the quality that we expect and our building department expects."

"This gives us the tools to address that if it's not happening," Bosworth said.

BARRY SLOAN

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