



Tips For Choosing a Reputable Contractor

The Wisconsin Builders Association (WBA) understands that for most people, their home is the biggest investment they will ever make. A home is also a place where people need to feel comfortable and safe. For these and other reasons, WBA urges all homeowners to gather as much information as possible about a contractor before signing a contract or allowing any work to begin on a new home or remodeling project.

Gathering information about a contractor will take some time, but the effort will be well worth it in the end. Important things to ask include:

- **Does the contractor have a permanent business location?**
- **What local suppliers and bankers does the contractor use? Call these companies for references.**
- **How long has the contractor been in business?**
- **How much experience does the contractor have with jobs similar to yours?**
- **Is the contractor a member of a trade association?** (Membership in the builders association, for example, is an indication of the contractor's interest in keeping up with the latest information about building industry technology, products and building materials)
- **Does the contractor have a record of complaints on file with the Office of Consumer Protection?** (Look in the phone book for your local Consumer Protection Agency. By providing the company name and address, a phone call will provide information about complaints filed in the last four years that were justified by Consumer Protection.)
- **Will the contractor provide names, addresses and phone numbers of past customers? Call these for references.** (Ask the references about the contractor's timeliness in completing the work, the quality of work, response time when follow-up calls are needed, and the contractor's manner in dealing with customers. Ask if they would hire the same contractor again. Also, be wary of a contractor that offers only out-of-town references.)
- **Will the contractor allow you to see other projects the company has done, both completed and in progress?** (If you choose to include the step of inspecting other projects, check for quality of workmanship and materials, or take someone with you if you are not personally knowledgeable in this area.)
- **Is the company sufficiently insured and/or certified?** (Check the contractor's name with the State of Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Division of Safety and Buildings, 608-266-3151, to see if the appropriate certification is on file.)
- **Will the contractor provide you with a complete and clearly written contract?** (A contract benefits both parties. Review it carefully! In addition, get a lien waiver from the contractor before you pay. This is proof that all the materials and labor have been paid for.)
- **Is the contractor submitting an unusually low-priced bid compared to others you've received?** (Be cautious! It's a dangerous situation if the contractor collects from you but cannot pay the suppliers from whom materials are purchased.)
- **Are you comfortable communicating and working closely with the contractor?** (Remember, for long-term projects, you will be in close contact with the contractor during the entire construction or remodeling project.)