

Hiring a Contractor

When shopping for home repairs, the first criteria that should be met are:

- Whether or not the person is properly licensed, and
- whether a permit is required for the work in question.

Hire only Licensed Contractors. Here's some advice when choosing a contractor:

- Before you hire a contractor, ask to see a local Authorized Contractor license or a State issued license.
- Be sure to look at the license and write the number down so you can call the Licensing Department and verify the license is on file and current with the required insurances.
- A Business Tax Receipt (Occupational) does not qualify an individual to act as a contractor.
- Get a written estimate from several licensed contractors make sure the estimate includes the work the contractor will do, the materials involved the completion date, and total cost.
- Don't sign off on work that is not completed according to your contract and has cleared all permits with final inspection and approval from the building department.
- Most jobs require permits. Always check with your local building department regarding permits needed for your project.

You may also verify a contractor is properly licensed by logging onto the Contractor Licensing site and search for the contractor or call the Contractor Licensing Department at 386-313-4085 or forward your questions by email.

You may also be referred to the State Business and Professional Regulation at (850)487-1395 or referred to their website: www.myfloridalicense.com

Signing a Contract or receiving a proposal:

- The contractor's name, address, telephone number and license number should appear on the document.
- A description of the work to be completed, including a payment schedule and type of materials to be used.
- Completion date, including cleanup after work in finished.
- Read your contract carefully and personally fill in any blank spaces. Consider having an attorney review the contract.

Do not rush to hire a contractor. It may provide a quick fix in the short term but could result in many serious and lasting consequences.

- Unlicensed contractors often target the uninformed and inexperienced, as well as the elderly.
- They solicit door to door, frequently traveling in unmarked truck and vans.
- They give a post office box address instead of a street address.
- They convince you to obtain the necessary building permits or advise you one is not needed.

It is extremely important to be cautious when contracting for home improvements and storm repairs. Educate yourself, become an informed consumer and protect yourself from dishonest persons who will use you to their advantage.

A "handyman" trade is not one of the construction-related licensing categories regulated by Flagler County and the State of Florida therefore, if you choose to hire a handyman, you will not be covered under the umbrella of protection of Florida Statutes and County Ordinances.