

After 40 years in business, what advice can we offer you?
By Troy K. Bardwell, President, D&M Roofing Enterprises, Inc.

In 40 years everything has changed. Many homeowners, especially new homeowners, still have no idea where to turn to for serious home repairs, whether the need be a new paint job or siding...or the repair of a leaky roof or gutter...or maybe it's just the purchase and installation of new windows.

Whatever the home improvement might be, there are general guidelines you should follow to select a competent contractor and here are a few:

- What is the full name and address of the contractor? Has this name ever changed? If so why? Is he listed in the phone book? If the contractor is not permanently established, how can you be confident he or she will be around to follow through and complete the job?
- If at all possible, visit the contractor's place of business. Does it appear to be well established and visible?
- Will the contractor furnish you with names and numbers of several of his previous customers?
- Who did he work for in your neighborhood over the past three years?
- Telephone one or more previous customers for their opinions in regard to the contractor's workmanship and reliability. Or better still, stop by, introduce yourself, look at the work done and ask if the homeowner is in fact really satisfied.
- Do his company's prices seem reasonable? Why not get a second opinion when you consider all the facts? Certainly, most of us choose a solution to almost any problem by price alone. Who is the low bidder, or is his price less than what you had budgeted for?
- As I have mentioned before, almost all of us are continuously looking for bargains. But if the price is too low, you should think again! Is it worth the risk? The fact is that, every year, we redo dozens of jobs for which the homeowner sadly got what he paid for!
- Does the home improvement contractor carry contractor's insurance? You should know that homeowners are constantly being sued for injuries on their property, and most homeowner's insurance policies exclude outside contractors. You have the right, and you should ask to see his or her Certificate of insurance. Is it current? (Unscrupulous contractors have been known to modify the dates.) Don't be fooled by the contractor who says he is self-employed and therefore doesn't need insurance. He does!
- How long has the contractor been in business? Generally the more experienced the better.
- Under five years, a company could lack stability. As a matter of fact, as many as 90 percent of all Home Improvement businesses fail in the first five years. You as the home owner want the contractor's warranty to mean something, and you want him to stand behind the warranty.
- Please also note all manufacturers' warranties are void if the product is not installed properly.
- Is the contractor a member of some of the local home improvement or business associations, such as the Maryland Improvement Contractors Association, NRCA, NARI, Better Business Bureau, or a local contractor's network, etc? Contractors who are truly committed to the profession will have such membership.

These are some of the more important questions you should ask when hiring a home improvement contractor.

Troy Bardwell is President of D&M Roofing Enterprises, Inc. in Gaithersburg, MD. His firm is members on The National Roofing Contractors Assoc., National Association of the Remodeling Industry, and Maryland Improvement Contractors Association. His family business has served Montgomery County for over 40 years!

www.DMHomeRemodel.com

301.948.0100