

Homeowners Guide to Hiring a Contractor

Every year Georgia homeowners are taken advantage of by unscrupulous contractors. Please take a few minutes to review the following tips if you are considering hiring a contractor to:

Build a New Home
Remodel, Renovate, or Repair an Existing Home
Perform Electrical, Plumbing, or Mechanical Repairs
Put on a New Roof, Install a Pool, Add a Sun Room

Avoid Dealing with Contractors Who:

- Use high-pressure sales tactics.
- Pressure you to sign contracts and documents immediately.
- Tell you they can help you get a loan from a lender they know.
- Only accept cash payments.
- Demand payment for the entire job upfront.
- Ask you to get the required permits.

Tips for Hiring a Reputable Contractor:

- All contractors who accept money for services provided are required by Georgia Law to maintain a current occupation tax (commonly referred to as a business license). As of July 1, 2008 any person performing contract work or activity in excess of \$2500.00 must hold a state license issued by the "State Licensing Board for Residential and General Contractors".
- In addition to an occupation tax, general contractors building new homes and/or additions must be "registered" with Lincoln County. Call the "Department of Planning and Zoning" at 706-359-5522 to verify that your contractor is registered. Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical Contractors are also required to be registered with the county and have a Georgia State Card for their trade.
- Find out how long the contractor has been in business.
- Obtain and check several references from former customers, preferably those who had similar work done. If possible, inspect the contractors work.
- Call the Code Enforcement Office at 706-359-5525 to see if any complaints have been filed against the contractor.
- Talk to subcontractors about the contractors payment history. The State of Georgia may allow subcontractors and/or material suppliers to file a mechanics lien against your home to satisfy their unpaid bills. Ask the contractor, subcontractors and suppliers for a lien release or lien waiver.
- Make sure that the contractor is responsible for obtaining any permits required for the job.
- Make sure the subcontractors have a current occupation tax.

Other Tips:

- Always get a written contract.
- Make sure all inspections have been performed and completed.
- Make sure the contractor completes the job. Don't make final payment until all of the work meets the standards spelled out in the contract, you have received a written warranty for materials and workmanship, you have proof that all subcontractors and suppliers have been paid, the job site has been cleaned up, you have inspected and approved the completed work and the county has issued a certificate of occupancy.
- Specialty Contractors who offer to perform for an owner limited, specialty, or specific trade contract work within their specialty do not have to hold a state license as a residential or general contractor. However nothing shall permit a specialty contractor to perform work or contractor services that fall within the licensing requirements of the "State Licensing Board for Residential and General Contractors".