



consumer tip

BBB Serving Central, Northern & Western Arizona
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Five BBB Tips to Consider When Hiring a Contractor for a New Home Project

(Prescott, AZ - January 6, 2014) The start of a new year for many means the start of a new home improvement project. Hiring a reliable contractor is one of the most important steps as it affects not only the quality of the project but also whether or not it will be completed on time. As a commonly complained about industry at Better Business Bureau (BBB), consumers are encouraged to extensively research contractors before hiring and making a significant investment.

In 2013, Better Business Bureau of Central, Northern and Western Arizona (BBB) received 127 complaints against general contractors, which is 13% less compared to complaints received in 2012.

"Although most contractors are reliable, there are those unscrupulous few who collect money and fail to complete the work," said Mary Hawkes, BBB Director of the Yavapai County Office. "Knowing the red flags and being cautious will help consumers choose a trustworthy contractor to help finish home improvement projects on time."

BBB advises consumers to be aware of the following red flags to help prevent home improvement rip-offs:

1. **Door-to-door solicitations:** Keep in mind that some contractors who attempt to gain business by visiting door-to-door or through "cold calls" may not be with a local, established business, but instead might just be passing through trying to make a quick buck.
2. **Materials left over from a previous job:** Be careful if a contractor shows up at your doorstep offering a cut-rate price on a project because they have left over materials from a recent job - possibly from a neighbor's house or the house "down the street." This is a common ploy of fly-by-night operators or handymen who are based out-of-state and use their trucks as their place of business.

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3. **Missing contact information:** Be sure to check the contractor's contact information. At a minimum, require a working phone number and an address and verify the information with BBB at arizonabbb.org. Also verify licensing information with the Arizona Registrar of Contractors (ROC) at azroc.org.
4. **High pressure sales tactics:** A reputable contractor recognizes that consumers need time to consider all the factors involved in deciding which contractor to hire. Take the time to check references and verify professional designations and affiliations. Also, verify insurance, and check licensing and bonding requirements. Obtaining three written estimates from different companies is also recommended.
5. **Upfront or cash only payment options:** Whatever the reason, never pay for the entire project upfront. Make payments by credit/debit card or check as a credit/debit card statement or cancelled check can serve as proof of payment, if needed. Agree on a payment plan before work begins. The payment plan should include partial payments made throughout the length of the project. Do not make the final payment or sign an affidavit of final release until you are satisfied with the work.

Consumers can check the status of a general contractor's license by visiting the Arizona Registrar of Contractors at www.azroc.gov.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with a BBB spokesperson, contact Mary Hawkes at 928-772-3410 or email mhawkes@arizonabbb.org.

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