

The Final Pick: After all your hard work you have finally found your contractor! The contractor may use their written estimate as a final contract or may present the same information in a different document. As your project gets underway, here are a few things to consider:

› **Look carefully before you sign.**

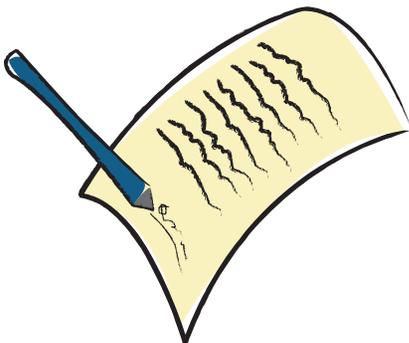
A complete contract should state clearly all tasks to be performed, all associated costs and the payment schedule. Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces. Guarantees made verbally by the contractor should be written into the contract. It should state how long the guarantee is valid, what it covers, and who is responsible. Make sure to keep a copy of the contract and any receipts in a safe place with your home owner's manual.

› **Make final payments only when all work is completed to your satisfaction.**

A reputable contractor will not threaten or pressure you to sign if the job is not finished properly.

› **Pay by check, not cash.**

Any legitimate contractor will work with you and accept a check or a cashier's check. Don't get pushed into anything else.



Watch Out!

For contractor scams...

- › **Avoid anybody who says they can speed up insurance payments or building permits.** They can't; or if they do, they are doing so illegally.
- › **Avoid anybody who wants a cash deposit or cash advance for payments in full.**
- › **Don't get rushed into a decision because you are responding to a disaster.** Scam artists love to prey on natural disaster victims or other high stress situations. Even though you may just want things fixed and back to normal NOW, do not rush into making a decision. Ask the same questions and go through the same process that you would at any other time. You do not want to make a bad situation worse.
- › **If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.** Be skeptical of low bids and great deals. Although price is important, professionalism and quality of workmanship should also be considered.

Better Business Bureau

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Costs associated with this publication are available from the Division of Building Safety in accordance with section 60-202, Idaho Code, DBS-P-09-10-2,500



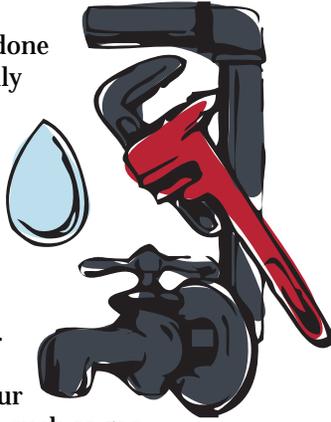
The Better Business Bureau &
the Idaho Division of Building Safety Present:

CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

Plumbing
Contractors



When you have work done in your home, you literally have to live with the results! And when that work deals with your home's plumbing, it takes on even more meaning since your family's health, safety and comfort are at stake. Plumbing emergencies may cause damage to your home, and certain kinds, such as gas leaks or sewage back-flow, may be dangerous.



It is important to pick a plumber ahead of time for emergency situations. When the toilet or sink gets clogged or the basement ceiling is wet from a broken pipe upstairs, finding trusted help quickly is imperative.

But, how do you know who will treat you and your home right and give you a fair price and a job well done? Well, the Better Business Bureau has teamed up with the Idaho Division of Building Safety to bring you these tips.

Make a List: First, get a list of contractor names to research.

› **Ask around.**

Friends and family may have some first-hand recommendations. You can also ask hardware or plumbing supply clerks for suggestions.

› **Check with the BBB.**

The BBB has great information on contractors in your area. Check bbb.org to get a list of plumbing contractors accredited by the BBB.

Make Some Calls: Your next job is to narrow down your list of contractors to 3-5. Start by calling each one and getting the following information:

› **Ask about availability.**

You want a plumber who is available for all your emergencies. He should be available every day of the week for no additional cost.

› **Verification of licenses.**

Idaho requires all plumbing contractors to be tested and to keep their licenses up to date. Get the contractor's license number and check with the state to verify the license. Go to dbs.idaho.gov.

› **Verification of Insurance.**

The contractor should carry general liability insurance and workers' compensation. If not, you may be liable for accidents that occur on your property.

› **References from former customers.**

Call some of the plumber's references. Ask them if they were happy with the work done, if the contractor finished as planned, if the contractor left everything clean and if they would use the contractor again. If you got the name of the contractor from a friend or family member, ask the same questions.

Check out licensing information for contractors in Idaho at dbs.idaho.gov and click the active licenses link in the top right corner.



For more tips and information as well as help finding trusted businesses go to www.BBB.org.



Get An Estimate: Once you have the list narrowed down, it is time to get estimates. Plumbers may give you custom estimates after an inspection or may charge a flat rate for some jobs. However, estimates should always be in writing and should always include a full description of the services to be provided.

› **Understand the problem**

A good plumber should be able to diagnose the problem and explain what needs to be done in terms you understand. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

› **While they are at your house, get a "read" on the person.**

Ask yourself, "Is this somebody I trust?" "Can I work with them for an extended period of time?" and "Am I willing to let them into my home?"

› **Once you get the bid, ask questions.**

If one contractor's bid is substantially higher or lower than the others, ask why. They may have noticed something the others did not. If there is anything you don't understand, ask the contractor about it or ask a knowledgeable friend.