

Tips for Selecting a Roofing Contractor

The critical success factor in any construction project is the contractor. When choosing a contractor, price is only one of the criteria for selection. Look for professionalism, experience and quality craftsmanship by doing your homework. The following questions will help you determine whether or not a potential contractor is right for your job.

Does the contractor have a permanent place of business?

What is the full name and address of the company? Check for a telephone number, tax identification number and a business license. Visit the contractor's place of business. Does it look established? Does it appear that the equipment, manpower, and wherewithal is available to complete your project in a professional and timely manner? Select someone you can call if a problem arises in the future.

How long has the company been in business?

Most contracting businesses (90%) fail within the first five years. Examine new business with extra care before awarding the project.

Does the company have a proven track record of happy, satisfied customers?

Check references carefully. Current references are only valuable to see if the owner is happy with the contractor's work, but only long term references are the proof of actual performance of the contractor's work. Automatically reject any contractors who cannot provide a reference list of customers.

Does the company carry the proper insurances?

Require potential contractor to show proof of insurance - for both worker's compensation and general liability insurance. Also ask about their Safety Plan, which is required by OSHA.

Is the roofing contractor properly registered and licensed?

Automatically reject any contractor who is not licensed. However, do not be fooled by a contractor with a license. Generally, the license requirements are minimal and the law is generally poorly enforced. A better test is to question the contractor's commitment to his trade. Being a member of trade association, the Chamber of Commerce, or local organizations demonstrates a commitment to professionalism.

Does the roofing contractor carry certifications with manufacturers?

Most roof systems require special application expertise to achieve lasting quality.

Does the company provide sufficient details for the project being performed?

Do the written estimates contain complete descriptions of the work and specifications, including approximate starting and completion dates and payment procedures? The contractor should be able to clearly explain how they plan to perform the work and what materials will be used. Establish the condition of the property before the work starts in the event there is property damage during construction.

Is the price reasonable and complete?

Be skeptical about lowest bids or those considerably lower than the others written for the same work. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Many below-cost bids seem attractive, but these contractors often are uninsured and perform substandard work.