

Tips on hiring a licensed contractor

We recommend hiring a contractor licensed by the state of Minnesota. A license ensures the company has met requirements that include having a principal of the company pass an exam and having liability and property damage insurance. A licensed contractor must also complete continuing education classes each year.

Hiring a licensed, bonded and insured contractor can help protect homeowners from non-complying work, costly errors, accidents, physical injury and improper installations. These potential problems can lead to property damage and adverse health effects to building occupants.

Licensed contractors are required by law for certain types of permit work. It is unlawful to knowingly enter into a contract with an unlicensed contractor in these situations. More info on who is required to have a license here: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors/who-needs-license>

Check to see if a contractor has a license here: <https://secure.doli.state.mn.us/lookup/licensing.aspx>

Some tips to help you hire a qualified professional. The Department of Labor and Industry has also put together a guide here: http://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/rbc_consumer_contractor.pdf

The Minnesota Attorney General's Office has also compiled a consumer publication covering your options and best practices for hiring contractors. That guide can be found here: <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Brochures/pubHomeBuilding.pdf>

1. The first step to selecting a contractor is to research the project so you will be knowledgeable about what the job involves.
2. Contact your local building inspector to find out what building permits and inspections you may need and what your legal obligations are regarding permits and inspections.
3. Start a list with the names of several contractors.
 - a. Start with friends and neighbors who have undertaken similar projects. Direct experience with a contractor and knowing how the contractor performed through a difficult project is often the best recommendation.
 - b. Hardware, building supply, and home improvement stores have ongoing business relationships with many contractors.
 - c. Trade associations can also be a good resource since your satisfaction with a contractor will be a reflection on the industry as a whole
 - d. Online forums such as ThumbTack, Angie's List and other are good places to start
4. Ask for the contractor to provide a Bid
 - a. Prior to meeting with each contractor, you should prepare a detailed list of what you envision the scope of work to be, including the types of materials to be used.
 - b. For any significant home improvement project, you should obtain at least three written bids that detail the scope of the work, the types of materials that will be used, and the total cost of the project.
5. The Department of Labor and Industry can tell you if a contractor is properly licensed and whether enforcement action has been taken against a contractor.

- a. contact the Better Business Bureau to find out if any complaints have been filed against a contractor.
 - b. Ask for and then call one or more reference from the contractor you are considering hiring.
- 6. Hire the one you feel best meets your criteria
 - a. Bids are usually open to negotiation
 - b. Balances Cost, Expertise, and Availability.