



How well do you know the roofing contractor you are hiring? Check them out first

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How well do you know the roofing contractor you are hiring? Spending a little time to research the company's background can save you from the financial pain of costly repairs later.

"You only get what you pay for!" How many times have you heard this expression? A low bid on a roof or repair may not be such a bargain. It could actually be more expensive if the low bid roofing contractor is using inferior materials or inexperienced labor. Before selecting a roofing contractor, research the following:

- * A permanent place of business. As simple as it sounds, this is the key to making sure the contractor is well-established with a permanent address, telephone number, tax identification and, where required, a business license.
- * Knowledge of various roofing systems. A professional contractor will be able to help consumers choose the right roof systems for their buildings and budget, using quality materials produced by reputable manufacturers.
- * Proof of insurance and an effective safety program. Building owners should ask for proof of the insurance the contractor carries and should make sure that it includes worker's compensation and general liability coverage. In addition, a professional contractor will have a safety program in place.
- * Financial Stability. Owners should choose a firm that is financially stable. They should ask to see the company's financial statements and the name of the auditing firm preparing the statements. Or speak to their suppliers of roofing materials
- * A written proposal. The contractor should provide a written proposal outlining the project details.
- * Licensed and/or bonded. Many states require that roofing contractors be licensed. Ask for the contractor's license number and evidence of bonding ability.
- * Warranties. Contractors should provide warranties to protect the building owner's investment, What is and isn't covered by the warranty?
- * References. Building owners ask for names and telephone numbers of the roofing contractor's recent clients.
- * A maintenance program. After the work is completed, professional roofing contractors will follow up with periodic inspections to ensure that potential trouble spots are fixed.

Researching roofing companies may not be foolproof for hiring a professional, but it can help building owners make the best possible decision.

Roofing contractors' experience and credentials differ. It is always best to deal with a contractor who has an established service track record and a good reputation.

In addition, owners should be cautious of materials that do not have a proven track record in their region. Manufacturers and contractors sometimes will provide case histories of new systems that have been established in Europe. However, owners should be cautious of using products that have

no established performance record in the United States. Building owners should ask for references from other building owners, as well as a list of similar projects that have been completed, and should verify any unusual claims made.

A reputable roof maintenance professional will routinely inspect in the spring and fall and after extreme weather events. Detected damage may be a justifiable insurance claim.

Areas most closely inspected

- * Flashings at skylights, perimeter flashings, parapet walls, pipe penetrations, mechanical equipment, curbs and drains.

- * Roof field where signs of ponding are evident, avoid ice and snow removal.

Good maintenance habits

- * Mechanical equipment should be placed on supports.

- * Overflow scuppers and gravel stop edges should be provided to prevent ponding.

- * Roof traffic should be kept at a minimum.

- * Regular inspections will extend the expected life of a newly installed or existing roof.

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