

Helpful Information about Hiring a Contractor



Hiring A Contractor

Whether you're planning an addition for a growing family or simply building a shed, finding a competent and reliable contractor is the first step to a successful and satisfying home construction or improvement project. These guidelines are intended to serve as a general reference guide to anyone looking to build, repair or improve their home.

1. Obtain names of several contractors

Home construction contractors are not licensed or regulated by the State of Texas. The State of Texas does require that any person performing plumbing, heating & air conditioning (hvac) and electrical work must be state licensed. We recommend that the homeowner ask the contractor for several references and follow up on them. Homeowners who live in and homestead their homes through Hays Central Appraisal District may do electrical, plumbing and mechanical work on their homes after securing the appropriate permits. For more information on these licensed trades go to:

Texas Plumbing Board of Examiners.

<http://www.tsbpe.state.tx.us/>

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations

<http://www.license.state.tx.us/LicenseSearch/>

2. Research your project

Ask questions of your friends, neighbors and local home improvement stores. Your research should include what has to be done, the best ways to do the work, the types of materials that may be used and their cost. Contact the Better Business Bureau before you make a final decision on any contractor to determine if there are any complaints on file.

3. Obtain and compare bids on your project

It's usually a good idea to ask at least three contractors to estimate the costs of your project. Make sure that the bids detail the scope of the work, the types of the materials that will be used and the total cost of the project.

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Once the bids are received, take time to compare them carefully. Be sure each includes everything you want. Keep in mind that the lowest bid is not necessarily the best bid. A particularly low bid may indicate that the contractor does not fully understand the scope of the project or is too inexperienced to accurately estimate the amount of labor and materials required.

4. Beware of con artists

Door-to-door fraud is a growing problem. Reputable contractors do not normally solicit work in this manner. Here are some signs to look for:

- Arrival in an unmarked vehicle;
- Ask you to sign an estimate or authorization before you have decided to actually hire them;
- Appear to be willing to do the job at an unusually low price;
- A post office address with no street address, or a phone number that is just an answering service;
- Asking for full or substantial payment before work begins;
- High pressure sales tactics;
- Refusal to give you a written estimate, contract or provide local references.

5. Signing a contract

Once you have agreed on a bid with a contractor, obtain it in writing. A contract should include at the minimum:

- An exact description of all the work to be performed
- A detailed list of the materials to be used which defines textures, brands, colors, sizes etc.
- The total dollar amount of the contract and a schedule for payments. Make every attempt to pay a minimal or no down payment for supplies or services.
- Who will be responsible for getting the necessary building permits, preferably the contractor
- Any promises made by the salesperson/contractor
- The starting and completion dates
- Any warranties provided by the contractor
- The contractor's signature as well as your own

6. Financing your project

If a lender is financing your construction project, make sure that you know your lender and that you understand how the loan proceeds will be disbursed and how subcontractors will be paid. Be careful of contractors who claim they can arrange financing for you.

A building permit is generally required when performing structural work or when a home's basic living area is changed. Separate permits for electrical, heating/cooling, or plumbing work are required in some cases. Check with the building department before starting a job to learn if a permit is required. When the building department issues a permit for home improvement work, it will inspect the work when that work has reached a certain stage to make sure it complies with various codes and regulations. The City of Kyle Building Inspection Department wants to be of service to you and urges you to call, or email us with any questions.

Mario Perez
Building Official
(512) 262-3918
mperez [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

Aaron Moore
Building Inspector
(512) 262-3913
amoore [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

Susan Hajek
Permit Coordinator
(512) 262-3911
shajek [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

Rene Salinas
Building Inspector
(512) 262-3916
rsalinas [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

Cherie Brune
Permit Coordinator
(512) 262-3910
cbrune [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

Lupe Gil
Code Enforcer
(512) 262-3914
lgil [at] cityofkyle [dot] com

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7. Completing the project

Before you sign off and make the final payment, make sure the job is complete. Check that:

- All work meets the standards spelled out in the contract
- You have written warranties for materials and workmanship;
- You have proof that all subcontractors and suppliers have been paid;
- The job site has been cleaned up and cleared of excess materials, tools and equipment;
- You have inspected and approved the completed work;
- The City's final inspection has been done and all appropriate approvals granted.

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