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Finding a Contractor

Always take the time to evaluate the contractor who may be doing the work. Every disaster has its share of con artists trying to take advantage of disaster victims.

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation recommend the following steps when hiring a contractor:

- ✓ Get at least two bids, and do not automatically choose the lowest.
- ✓ Ask for local references and then contact them.
- ✓ Contact the Residential Builder's Commission of the Contractor's Licensing Board at (803) 896-4300 or via the internet at <http://www.llr.state.sc.us/> to see if the builder/contractor is licensed and whether there have been complaints against him/her.
- ✓ Make sure the builder/contractor is bondable.
- ✓ Never pay for an entire job upfront. The down payment should be no more than one-third of the total contract price.
- ✓ Be specific about what you want done. Put details in writing, if possible, preferable obtain a written contract.
- ✓ Check with appropriate local building officials concerning permits.

Also, talk to building officials. Be particularly cautious when selecting a contractor to repair your chimney. Not everyone is qualified to repair or rebuild a chimney. It takes specialized skill and training.

- ✓ Be wary of contractors soliciting door-to-door.
- ✓ Ask contractors if they have done this type of repair work before, if they will be purchasing the necessary permits, and if the work will be inspected.
- ✓ Check for a permanent place of business, telephone number, tax id number, and business license.
- ✓ Contact your local Better Business Bureau to check for a business report or any complaints that have been filed on a contractor.
- ✓ Have the contractor explain his/her project supervision and quality control procedures. Request the name of the person who will be in charge, how many workers will be required and the estimated completion time.
- ✓ Carefully read and understand any warrantee offered and watch for provisions that would void it.

Remember, the lowest bid is not always the best option. A price is only one criterion for selecting a contractor. Professionalism and quality workmanship also should weigh heavily in your decision.