

Blueprint for a Quality Contractor

As a new or renovating homeowner, you have many questions to ask and decisions to make. Floor plans and paint color are certainly important, but there is one issue that should be given serious consideration: your electrical products. Counterfeiting has increased over 10,000% in the past two decades and counterfeit electrical products are uniquely dangerous. They have been known to ignite, explode and pose a shocking hazard. Finding a competent contractor is your best defense against counterfeit products. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) has developed this "Blueprint" to help you pick the right person for the job to ensure your home is a lasting source of comfort and safety.

Questions to Ask a Potential Contractor:

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| 1. Are you properly licensed and registered? | Check with your local building department or consumer protection agency to find out your area's licensing requirements. If your state or locality has licensing laws, ask to see the license and make sure it's current. |
| 2. Have you completed similar projects? | Ask for a list of references and request permission to speak with them. This will help you determine how familiar the contractor is with your type of project and the quality of their work. |
| 3. Will this project require a permit? | Most states and localities require permits for any building projects. A quality contractor will get all the necessary permits before starting work on your project. |
| 4. Are you properly insured? | Contractors should have personal liability, worker's compensation, and property damage coverage. Ask for copies of insurance certificates and make sure they're current. |
| 5. Will you use subcontractors on this project? | If yes, make sure they also have current insurance coverage and any required licenses. Protect yourself by asking the contractor, and every subcontractor and supplier, for a lien release or lien waiver, so you aren't responsible should the contractor fail to pay his debts. |
| 6. What are my payment options? | Avoid paying in cash. Try to limit your down payment and make additional payments contingent on project completion milestones. Discuss your terms should the final cost exceed the estimate. |
| 7. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been involved in legal action? | This isn't necessarily a deal-breaker, but something you should be aware of. Ask for them to explain and check public records so you can make an informed decision. |
| 8. Do you offer guarantees covering the workmanship and the materials used? | Include any warranties in the project contract. The names and addresses of the parties honoring the warranties - contractor, distributor or manufacturer - must be identified. The length of the warranty period and any limitations also should be spelled out. |

For more information visit www.ESFI.org.