# Choosing a Professional Roofer

## Homeowner's Guide

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SAINT-GOBAIN

# Meet Your New Roof

The key to your dream roof is finding the right roofing contractor for the job.

It's vital to know that you can rely on the roofing contractor to give you good advice about products and procedures.

That's why CertainTeed has developed this guide to selecting a roofing contractor. The questions contained in this brochure are designed to help you determine the reliability, reputation and experience of a contractor.

A top-notch, professional roofing contractor will be happy to answer the questions within. And just as it makes sense to receive several bids on your roofing job, it also makes sense to ask each contractor these questions.

We've also outlined some important points to consider as you evaluate the terms of your proposed contract.

Being certain you've selected the right roofing contractor will ensure that you have a quality roof overhead and that your money has been wisely spent.

# Get to Know Your Contractor

## Allow yourself an hour, more or less, to sit down with each contractor.

You might be speaking with a salesperson or even the owner. Good contractors take pride in their work, and so should the salesperson representing the company.

The salesperson should show pride, enthusiasm and knowledge about previous projects they have completed. This is a good indicator of their involvement in the work being performed by their company.

# 7 Questions

## to Ask Your Roofing Contractor

How can you tell if a contractor is a true professional who will stand behind their work?

While there is not a single, clear-cut answer, there are a number of indicators that you can look for when going through the evaluation process.

# 1. What is the full name and address of the company?

Getting the complete address of the company can be an important factor in determining a company's stability. If a post office box is given, ask for a full street address as well. A company that has been in business for a long time is generally assumed to be more stable.

If you hire a contractor that has an office nearby, the likelihood of better service and quicker response time is greater if the company is based near your home.

# 2. Does the company carry insurance?

A contractor should carry comprehensive liability insurance and workers' compensation insurance to protect you in the event of a roofing accident.

This can be verified by asking to see the contractor's certificates of insurance.

Contractors may also carry other kinds of insurance, including health, life and auto. These insurance policies are not the same as workers' compensation* and general liability.

Don't be fooled. Ask for current certificates of insurance to be sent to you by the insurer before the job is started.

* Workers' compensation insurance not required in Texas.

# 3. Is the company a licensed contractor?

Not all states require contractors to be licensed.

If your state does license contractors, then they might have to pass a written examination in their specialty, although few licenses make this a requirement.

A number of cities also require professional licensing. Check with your local licensing authority for details.

A contractor may also answer this question by providing you with a business license. However, a business license is a taxrequirement and is not directly relevant to the contractor's competence.

# 4. How long has the company been in business?

Needless to say, longer is usually better. Under three years may signal an unstable business or one low on the learning curve.

On the other hand, everybody has to start somewhere. References will be helpful to double check any business and are especially important when dealing with a new business.

A newer business may have a great future but it is only reasonable to be more careful when considering its referrals. The failure rate of small businesses in the first three years is high.

# 5. Will the company provide referrals or references from previous jobs?

Ask for photos of completed work, if available. Keep in mind, however, that many roofers will not have photos.

Request a list of 10 names and phone numbers of recent customers (from the last 12 months). It is not necessary to check all 10, but you will be able to pick randomly from the list those you do call.

# 6. What is the company's workmanship warranty?

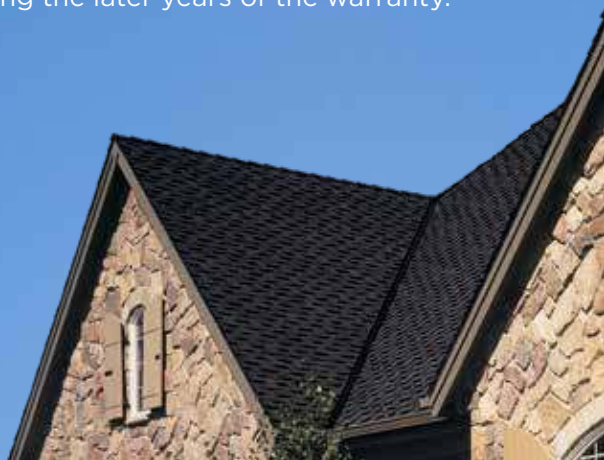
Typically, contractor workmanship warranties are for one year or more. Longer warranties are not necessarily more valuable than shorter warranties.

The length of the warranty is less important than the intent and ability of the roofer to stand behind their warranty. That is best evaluated using customer referrals.

Ask their prior customers specifically for information about these four things:

- Did they perform their work on a timely basis?
- Were they responsive when asked for information and changes?
- Did they act as if they cared about the customer's interests?
- And finally, would you call the company trustworthy?

Usually, problems of either workmanship or material show up very quickly. Therefore, the near-term warranty given by the contractor or manufacturer is more important than the warranty coverage during the later years of the warranty.



# 7. What is the company's track record for solving customer complaints?

Try to find out how your contractor handles problems when they do arise. Request a referral from a job that involved a complaint.

Ask the contractor if they ever lost a job-related court case, or if their contractor's license has ever been suspended and why.

Also, in talking to the appropriate authorities, such as the Better Business Bureau and licensing departments, find out if any complaints have been filed against the contractors whom you have interviewed.

Many contractors in business for any length of time have been involved in a dispute. Ask how the dispute was resolved, to test your contractor's reputation.

# Evaluating the Contract

Before you get to this stage, you will have received from the roofer either a job proposal or an estimate. Estimates and proposals can be very different approaches to your job.

## What is an estimate?

An estimate will typically offer a single price, a generically described product, a color and no options. This is traditional and legitimate. But it isn't consumer-friendly.

## What is a proposal?

A proposal is a tentative agreement for a project. It offers a choice of products by brand name, prices, services and even designs.

Many other provisions may also be included, such as change-order conditions and financing options.

The homeowner should expect three product choices. These could be presented in the typical range of good, better and best.

# Details, Details!

Most contracts for roofing work are simple and straightforward. The larger or more experienced contractors may have longer, more detailed contracts.

Regardless of the form of the agreement, you should read all of the specific items in the contract carefully.

## Compliance with local codes and ordinances

Will they be observed? Are permit costs included? Who will obtain the permit? What about provisions for posting zoning notices? Have inspections been planned?

## Product choices

Have you been offered a choice of good, better, best shingles? Are they identified by brand and manufacturer name? Is there a clear reference to the warranty which will cover the shingles to be applied? Is the manufacturer's name for the color of the shingle you are buying stated in the contract? Do you understand the difference in the aesthetics from one shingle to another (including not only color but also texture, style, construction, reinforcement and UL ratings)?

## Scheduling

Start and stop dates are difficult to pin down due to the unpredictability of the weather. But you can control exceptions. For instance, negotiate a "no-later-than" clause*. Be reasonable, but do make it clear that these terms will be enforced if necessary.

* Some state laws require a no-later-than clause.

## Right-to-rescind

This clause establishes a time period in which the homeowner can cancel the contract without penalty. Some states require such a clause in contracts. Check with your local authorities.

Three days is usually the time period given for a right-to-rescind without penalty. If the homeowner cancels the job after the right-to-rescind period has elapsed, then the contractor may request a certain dollar or percentage value of the contract in return.

## Manufacturer's warranty specifications

Confirm that the agreement states that all workmanship will conform to the requirements of the manufacturer's warranty and installation instructions. Especially take note that this includes ventilation requirements, fastener requirements, low slope installation terms and ice dam protection.

All such terms are normally found on the shingle packaging, or will be found on the manufacturer's website.

## Contractor's workmanship warranty

Make sure this is clearly noted in the contract.

## Cleanup

Call for a daily cleanup of the premises. This becomes very important if shingle tear-off is necessary.

## Payment terms

Schedule, terms and method of payment should be written out fully with no room for misunderstandings.

## Preliminary inspection

Finally, agree to an inspection before the job with the job supervisor. Establish the condition of the property before any work is done. Take special care to list the conditions of landscaping and equipment located under or near the roof eaves.

# Seal the Deal

A contractor is shopping for good jobs that will make a fair profit and bring future referrals.

Many contractors have had experiences with unreasonable or dishonest homeowners. Therefore, they look for warning signs of customer problems during the initial job interview.

Show the contractor that you are an informed consumer who has the best interests of both parties in mind.

Here's how you can get a roofer to respond to your call:

- When you call a roofer, tell them you are shopping around, but are only interviewing three contractors, not 10.
- Call contractors in the general vicinity. Roofers prefer to work close to home, just like everyone else.
- Tell the contractor you call that you are not looking for the lowest bid, but rather the best value. And ask for a Good-Better-Best proposal.
- If you have seen work by a contractor in your neighborhood and you liked it, or if someone referred a contractor to you, call them. And when you do call, mention how you received the contractor's name.

# Easy Selection.

# Long-Term Protection.

Builders and remodelers across America know certain things to be true of CertainTeed.

For starters, we've been in the roofing business for more than 110 years, and we have thousands of satisfied homeowners. Building that level of satisfaction begins the moment you turn to us.

CertainTeed offers you the broadest range of color and style choices. But you'll see it's not style over substance.

You'll get a roof that's made from the highest quality materials and backed by a strong warranty program.

It's our promise to you:
**quality made certain, satisfaction guaranteed.**

learn more at:
certainteed.com/roofing

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