

HELPFUL REMINDERS

- * Avoid unlicensed home improvement contractors.
- * Comparison shop—obtain more than one estimate.
- * Don't use a contractor to do work if you believe he lacks the proper skills to do the job.
- * Don't use a contractor who you believe violates local building laws.
- * Don't pay a contractor prior to reading and signing a contract.
- * Don't pay the entire cost of the home improvement job in advance. Maryland law prohibits the contractor from receiving more than one third of the contract price at the time the contract is signed.
- * Request a copy of the contractors' liability insurance certificate



Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

Tips For Choosing A Home Improvement Contractor



Maryland Home Improvement Commission (MHIC)

Phone: (410) 230-6309

Website: www.dllr.state.md.us/license/mhic

Email: dloplmhc-dllr@maryland.gov

What is Home Improvement ?

The home improvement law defines "home improvement" as the addition to or alteration, conversion, improvement, modernization, remodeling, repair or replacement of a building or part of a building that is used or designed to be used as a residence or dwelling place or a structure adjacent to that building; or an improvement to land adjacent to the building. For more information, please visit www.dllr.maryland.gov/license/mhic, call MHIC at 410-230-6309 or email dloplmhc-dllr@maryland.gov

TYPE OF WORK USUALLY REQUIRED TO BE LICENSED BY THE MARYLAND HOME IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION (NOT ALL INCLUSIVE)

Interior of Residence

- Carpentry
- Central vacuum systems
- Built-in closet organizers
- Marble
- Home theatre construction
- Painting
- Plastering

Exterior of Residence

- Awnings
- Bricklaying
- Driveways
- Excavating
- Fences
- Flagstone
- Grading
- Gravel driveways
- Gutters and downspouts
- House structural lifting & reattachment
- Landscaping
- Painting
- Patios
- Paving
- Masonry pointing
- Sidewalks
- Siding
- Railings
- Roofs
- Sod (when landscaping)
- Stairs
- Stucco

Accessibility Features

- Chair lifts for stairs
- Overhead lift systems (permanently mounted)
- Ramps

Cleaning and Treatments

- Acid treatment
- Acoustical treatment (permanently mounted)
- Lead paint abatement
- Radon gas mitigation
- Sandblasting
- Sealants
- Waterproofing

Doors and Windows

- Doors
- Screens
- Skylights
- Stained glass
- Shutters (exterior)
- Storm doors
- Storm windows
- Window tinting
- Windows

Energy Conservation

- Insulation
- Solar panel systems
- Windmills

Fire

- Chimney repairs
- Fire alarm systems
- Fire escapes
- Fireplaces

Floors and Walls

- Caulking
- Ceilings
- Drywall
- Floating floors
- Linoleum
- Paneling
- Terrazzo
- Tile
- Wallpapering
- Wall coverings (permanent)
- Floor coverings (carpet not included)

Metal/Stone/Marble (exposed)

- Metal
- Masonry
- Ornamental railings
- Stone/Stone-cast

Kitchen and Bath

- Bathroom
- Cabinets
- Kitchen
- Shower and bath enclosures
- Sinks and countertops
- Tile
- Vanities

Pools/Hot Tubs

- Hot tubs - permanent
- Pools
- Pool covers
- Pool houses

Structures

- Carports
- Club rooms
- Decks
- Fallout shelters
- Foundations
- Garages
- Piers (non-marine)
- Pole buildings
- Porch enclosures
- Porches
- Retaining walls
- Sunrooms

Department of Labor
Division of Occupational & Professional Licensing
Home Improvement Commission
500 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-230-6309



Larry Hogan, Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Tiffany P. Robinson, Secretary

10 Tips for Choosing a Home Improvement Contractor

1. Decide which improvements you want to make to your home

Determine the type of improvement you want to make to your home and the amount of money you can comfortably spend. Take the time to write down the details of the work you want done before you contact a home improvement contractor.

2. Seek licensed contractors

Hire only **licensed contractors**. By hiring a licensed contractor you may be eligible for the Guaranty Fund in case you become a victim of unworkmanlike or incomplete work.

3. Obtain more than one estimate for the improvements you want to make

Always comparison shop. Obtain estimates from more than one licensed home improvement contractor.

4. Ask prospective contractors to show you their home improvement licenses

Ask prospective contractors to show you their home improvement licenses. **Check the license expiration date.**

5. Check contractors licensing status

You can confirm that a contractor is licensed by going to the Home Improvement Commission website at: www.dllr.maryland.gov/license/mhic and click on "License Search".

6. Check the contractor's record

Call the Home Improvement Commission at (410) 230-6309 to check the record of the home improvement contractors. The Home Improvement Commission's staff can tell you if the contractor is currently licensed, whether complaints have been filed against the contractor, and whether the complaints have been resolved.

7. Request references from the prospective contractor

Ask the contractor for the names and telephone numbers of customers. Check with references about the quality of the work and whether the work was completed on time.

8. Choose the contractor who is right for you

Carefully review the contractor's estimate, home improvement record, and references. Choose the contractor who best fits your needs and who can provide the best service at the price you can afford.

9. Always get a written contract

Always get a written contract **before** you permit work on your home to proceed. Make sure the contract includes the approximate date the work will begin, details the type of improvements that are to be made, the materials to be used, the estimated completion date, the contract price and payment schedule. Carefully read the contract before signing. Be sure you check to see if the contract contains an arbitration clause.

10. Request to see the building permit

Certain types of home improvement work require building permits from your local government. Check with your local licensing and permit department to see if a permit is needed. If it is, make sure the contractor shows you the building permit before you allow work to begin.

BONUS TIP: Do not pay before reading or signing a contract

Maryland law prohibits a contractor from demanding and receiving payment before a contract is signed.

The Home Improvement Guaranty Fund

The Home Improvement Commission administers a Guaranty Fund, which **may** compensate homeowners for monetary losses resulting from unworkmanlike or incomplete work by **licensed contractors**. The Guaranty Fund may pay up to \$20,000 per individual claim, and the total amount of all claims paid against a single contractor may not exceed \$100,000. **The Guaranty Fund does not pay claims against unlicensed contractors.** To be protected, make sure you use a licensed contractor.

Contact the Home Improvement Commission for details concerning how to file a complaint or claim.

The Maryland Improvement Commission (MHIC)

The Commission (MHIC) has been serving Maryland consumers since 1962. We believe that a successful home improvement project adds to the value of your home and your well-being. Please read the information contained in this brochure carefully before signing any contract. MHIC administers the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund to compensate consumers for monetary losses which arise from poor or incomplete unworkmanship by licensed contractors. If you have questions, or need more information, call MHIC at (410) 230-6309, email dloplmhc-dllr@maryland.gov or go to the website at dllr.maryland.gov/license/mhic

