

## Homeowners-Don't Get Scammed

There are many legitimate, ethical, qualified, and established contractors in business right here in the Greater Charlotte region. Sadly, there are also many unethical scam artists that show up in communities suffering from a natural disaster and they take advantage of the people who have been hurt the most. Do not allow these "storm chasers" to scam you.



What to look for and what to be wary of:

- 1. No license or insurance:** All professional contractors should be insured and able to show a current certificate of insurance and provide a copy to potential clients. They should also be able to provide their contractor's license number (not just a business license number).
- 2. Require a signature for work before you have hired them:** Do not be pressured into signing a contract or estimate just to "get in line". Read details before signing anything. That estimate could be a binding contract. Do not allow fear and delays to rush you into signing something until you have done your homework.
- 3. Doesn't have a clear and concise contract:** Professionals will provide you with a clear and concise contract detailing the scope of work, process, costs, and how to manage unanticipated events. Do not hire anyone that tells you a contract isn't necessary.
- 4. Requires cash or payment in full before starting the job:** Unscrupulous individuals will demand cash or payment before they even start the work and will likely run with the money. A deposit may be requested for materials. This would only be requested upon execution of a legitimate contract signed by BOTH parties. Payment must be made to the same party listed on contract and not a sales person.
- 5. SIGNIFICANTLY underbids other contractors:** Best price does not always equal best work. Lower costs could result in lower quality materials and shoddy workmanship.
- 6. No References:** A legitimate contractor will be able to provide current, local references from their clients. If possible, take the time to visit their previous jobs. A happy client won't mind. Ask for a bank reference as well.
- 7. Lack of Communication:** Professional contractors will respond to inquiries in a timely manner. Verify telephone, office, and/or mailing address are accurate.
- 8. Asks you to obtain Building Permit:** Licensed contractors will have the authority and ability to obtain the necessary permits and licenses required to do work in your jurisdiction.

### Do Your Homework

1. Contact the NC Licensing Board for General Contractors to verify a current license and check on unresolved complaints.
2. Contact the Home Builders Association of Greater Charlotte (or the HBA in your community) to verify they are a member of this organization. Membership is not mandatory but does demonstrate a local connection and commitment to their profession.
3. Verify that their insurance is current. Contact the agent listed on the Certificate of Insurance to confirm it is current.
4. Record car tag numbers, make and model.
5. Take photographs before work begins. Monitor work regularly and keep a photo and written journal of the process.
6. Address concerns with contractor immediately. Detail resolution and document.

Problems:

Report any suspicious contractor to the NC Licensing Board.

The process of working with a contractor is typically a good experience. Unfortunately, the few bad apples can compound an already tragic situation.

NC Licensing Board for General Contractors

Tel: 919.571.4183

Website: [www.nclbgc.org](http://www.nclbgc.org)

Home Builders Association of Greater Charlotte

Tel: 704.376.8524

Website: [www.hbacharlotte.com](http://www.hbacharlotte.com)