



## Selecting a Reliable Contractor

By Tom Lienhard, PE, CEM

There are many energy efficiency improvements you can make around your home that require little or no handyman skills, but some energy efficiency improvements call for a good, reliable contractor. Doing your homework before signing on the dotted line is an important step in making sure your project is successful and that you get the results you expect.

Whether it's installing a high-efficiency heating system or water heater, adding insulation or a fireplace damper, or other home project, you should consider the following when selecting a contractor:

- Get at least three written estimates or bids, comparing services and prices before making a final decision.
- Be aware of aggressive sales tactics and do not sign a contract for work until you've taken time to consider the purchase.
- Verify proof of current and up-to-date contractor registration with the Washington Department of Labor and Industries at [www.ini.wa.gov](http://www.ini.wa.gov) or the Bureau of Occupational Licensing in Idaho at [www.ibol.idaho.gov](http://www.ibol.idaho.gov).
- Ensure that the contractor has the experience and any needed certification to do your work.
- Check local references to make sure previous customers were satisfied with the work, noting if it was completed timely and at the agreed contract rate.
- Verify that the contractor has workers' compensation and general liability insurance. If the contractor is not insured, your home or business may be liable for accidents that occur on your property.
- Take time to verify any financial incentives like tax credits or utility rebates that contractors do not administer because they may be subject to eligibility requirements and program changes.
- Cancel a contract within three business days of signing by following the procedures outlined in your contract, making sure to send the cancellation by certified mail.

Energy efficiency improvements can make your home more comfortable while helping manage your energy use. Be a smart shopper and get the most from your energy dollar.

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