



# SAFE TO REBUILD

Attorney General Jeff Jackson's Consumer Protection Division protects North Carolina consumers from unfair business practices like scams and fraud. Here are our tips for hiring a reputable contractor:

## 1 Do your research.

- **Get written estimates and compare bids.** Avoid doing business with someone who knocks on your door. Instead, ask trusted neighbors and friends for recommendations and compare at least three written estimates before you select a contractor.
- **Check the contractor's license.** A contractor must be licensed by the North Carolina Licensing Board for General Contractors for projects costing \$40,000 or more. Search at: <https://portal.nclbgc.org/Public/Search>. The Licensing Board oversees licensed contractors and can take action against a licensed contractor that engages in certain unlawful practices.
- **Search the name of the business and business owner, operator, point of contact, or project supervisor.** Scam contractors often change their business name multiple times. If you search for the name of the owner, operator, etc., you may discover the person has a bad reputation.
- **Contact the NCDOJ Consumer Protection Division** (1-877-5-NO-SCAM) and the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)) to learn about any complaints against the company.

## 2 Ready to hire?

- **Get a written contract** detailing all the work to be done, including: price, payment schedule, work to be done, quality of materials, and the deadline for completion. If the contractor doesn't stick to your contract terms, do your best to demand that the terms be followed. Consider it a warning sign if the contractor tries to change any of the terms.
- **Read your contract carefully.** The sales rep may try to rush through your review of the contract or claim that parts are not important. All terms in a contract are important, and you should be given enough time to understand exactly what you are signing.
- **Remember your right to cancel.** Business representatives will often sign up customers at home by using digital contracts on tablets. Under state law, contracts that take place at a location that is not the seller's normal place of business, such as at your home, can be canceled up to three days after you sign the contract. The contract must clearly state this, and the seller must give the buyer a copy of the signed contract when it is signed (often the seller neglects to do this when the contract is signed on a tablet).

## 3 Protect your payment.

- **Don't pay in advance.** While it is reasonable for a contractor to ask for a deposit, don't pay for most or all of the work before it is completed. And be suspicious if the contractor keeps asking for funds to purchase materials—they may lack the resources and expertise to complete your project.
- **Do not pay in cash.** If possible, pay by credit card.

## ! Beware of unsolicited work, such as:

- People from **out of state** who knock on your door offering to do work. They may be scammers who will collect money from several homeowners and then disappear without doing any work.
- Someone who knocks on your door claiming to have "**extra materials**" they can offer you for a "great deal" – like paving scammers. They may not do a great job, and they'll insist you pay them more than the quoted price because they claim they did more work.
- **Unexpected problems** that the contractor notices after they've started work on a known problem. The problems may not exist, or if they do, the contractor may not be qualified to fix them.

If you have a complaint about a contractor or want to report a home repair scam, visit [ncdoj.gov/complaint](http://ncdoj.gov/complaint) or call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM.



Attorney General

**Jeff Jackson**