

BEFORE SIGNING THE CONTRACT

- Check with your local city or county building department to determine the licensing requirements for your area and make sure the contractor you are considering is properly licensed, bonded, and insured.
- Get a written contract. Indiana law requires home improvement contracts exceeding \$150 to be in writing. Before signing the contract, make certain it includes:
 - The price of the job
 - Payment schedule
 - A detailed description of the work and materials.
 - Estimated start and completion dates.
 - The contractor's name and address.
 - A contact name and number if problems arise.
 - The contractor's signature.
- Never pay for the entire project before the work begins. Do not pay more than 1/3 of the total cost as a down payment. Remaining payments should be tied to completion of specified amounts of work.

AFTER SIGNING THE CONTRACT

- Contact your local city or county building department to see if a permit is needed. Many localities require permits for building projects. A contractor should not start work until the permit is issued.
- To avoid a mechanics lien against your home, don't make the final payment to the contractor until you know that all the subcontractors and/ or suppliers have been paid. Get written proof of payment.

- Get a copy of any warranties. If a contractor guarantees labor and/ or materials, those warranties should be in writing.
- Keep all records relating to your project. This includes the contract, any change orders, warranties, and correspondence. These records are important, especially if you have a problem with your project.

Even if precautions are taken, problems may arise. Take time to talk to your contractor to resolve these issues. If problems continue, put your complaints in writing and send them to the contractor. Be sure to keep a copy of any complaints and correspondence for your records.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

- **City of LaPorte**
 - Department of Engineering and Building Services
 - 801 Michigan Av., LaPorte, IN 46350
 - Ph: (219) 362-2327
- **LaPorte County**
 - Plan and Zoning Commission
 - 809 State St., Suite 503A, LaPorte, IN
 - Ph: (219) 326-6808 ext. 2219, 2221, or 2418
- **Indiana Attorney General**
 - Consumer Protection Division
 - 302 W. Washington St., 5th Floor
 - Indianapolis, IN 46204
 - Ph: (317) 232-6330 or 1-800-382-5516
- **Better Business Bureau**
 - Central Indiana
 - 22 E. Washington St., Suite 200
 - Indianapolis, IN 46204-3584
 - Ph: (317) 488-2222
 - Email: info@indybbb.org
- **Indiana Consumers**
 - www.indianaconsumers.com

AVOID HOME REPAIR FRAUD



TIP OFFS to RIP OFFS

Provided courtesy of:
LaPorte Police Department
1206 Michigan Av., LaPorte, IN 46350
Ph.(219) 362-9446

A Community Oriented Policing based agency

Although there are many honest and reputable home repair contractors, there are many types of home repair frauds committed by people who are anything but honest and hardworking.

The best way to protect yourself from becoming a victim of these “scammers” is by making yourself knowledgeable about your consumer rights and exercising common sense.

Most home repair scams occur during the spring and fall. The most popular type of home repair frauds are roof repair, asphalt paving/ driveway sealing, house painting, termite and pest control, tree pruning and landscaping.

Sometimes a scam artist will just show up at your door. It’s commonly referred to as a door-to-door sale and it’s a favorite among bogus home improvement operators.

Seniors, those who live alone, and victims of weather-related disasters are common targets.

TIP OFFS to RIP OFFS

A less than reputable contractor:

- Solicits door-to-door;
- States he notices that your roof (or other area on your house that is hard to check) needs repair;
- Just happens to have materials left over from another job. He might say he can give you a better deal if you let him do the work today since he has the supplies now;

- Offers you discounts for finding other customers;
- Only accepts cash payments or asks you to make a check payable to a person other than the owner or company name;
- Fails to provide customer references when requested;
- Offers to drive you to the bank to withdraw funds to pay for the work.
- May trick you into signing a contract without disclosing all the charges;
- Does not list a telephone number in the local telephone directory;
- Tells you your job will be a “demonstration”;
- Pressures you to make an immediate decision;
- Offers exceptionally long guarantees;
- Asks you to pay for the entire job up front;
- Suggests that you borrow money from a lender the contractor knows.



REMEMBER

IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS!

PREVENTION TIPS

- Never let a door-to-door solicitor into your home.
- Don’t be misled by claims of huge savings “If you act today” or other high-pressure sales tactics.
- Get at least three (3) written estimates on the work to be done and the cost from other contractors.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau and the Indiana Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division about whether your contractor is reputable.
- Ask for references from previous customers and speak to them directly.
- Insist on a written contract that specifies in detail the work to be completed, start and completion dates, and substantial payment dates. It should also include the company’s name, address and telephone number.
- Obtain the name of the sales person and a complete itemized list of materials and costs.
- Always obtain a lien waiver. The lien waiver states that the contractor performing the job bears the cost burden of the materials and prohibits the contractor from putting a lien on your home.
- Beware of companies that require a large down payment. A reputable company will have the resources to provide the labor and materials to complete the job without your money.