

Be Wary of Contractors Who Call on You

Last week's hail storm has led to a surge in phone calls from construction and roofing contractors who want to inspect anyone's roof for possible damage. If you live in the South Denver metro area, I'm sure you've received a few of these calls or seen a few of these folks at your door.

Experts warn us that some of these professionals who are knocking on your door or calling your home are reputable, but others are not. Because it's crucial that you have a reputable contractor do your work, I tell people to avoid the door-knockers and phone-callers.

It's better to seek out recommendations from your friends and neighbors who have had their roofs replaced in the past. If you've lived in your home for any length of time, you've probably already been through this drill – given Colorado's tendency for hail storms.

But if you decide to hire someone who comes to your door or calls you, make sure you check them out first. Among other things, make sure they are licensed and have adequate insurance coverage. You might also want to check with the area Home Builders Association, Better Business Bureau or local Chamber of Commerce.

To avoid becoming the victim of fraud, here's a good checklist provided by the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association:

- Get more than one estimate. Don't be pushed into signing a contract right away.
- Get everything in writing. Cost, work to be done, materials, time schedule, guarantees, payment schedule

and other expectations should be detailed.

- Demand references and check them.
- Ask to see the salesperson's driver's license and write down the license number and license plate number.
- Ask for proof that the contractor is bonded, carries liability insurance and covers his/her workers with workers compensation insurance.
- The contractor's business card should have a verifiable street address and office phone number.
- Never sign a contract with blanks; unacceptable terms can be added later.
- Never pay a contractor in full or sign a completion certificate until the work is finished. Request a lien waiver, indicating the contractor has paid its subcontractors and suppliers.
- Insurance coverage may be rendered void if intentional misrepresentation by a policyholder is discovered.
- If you believe you have been approached by an unlicensed contractor or adjuster, or have been encouraged to fabricate an insurance claim, contact your insurance company or call the National Insurance Crime Bureau Hotline at 1-800-TEL-NICB (1-800-835-6422).