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Informational Alert – 12 Steps to Safely Hiring a Contractor

by Stacie Harris, Economic Crimes Unit

- Contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to check out any contractors that submit bids. **DO NOT** trust that the BBB symbol on the contract, advertisement in the phone book or on the side of the business truck is proof that they are BBB recognized. Always check the company out with the BBB first by calling (866)206-1800 or visiting their website at www.bbbsc.org.
- Insist on a written contract that outlines your entire agreement. Two of the most important items that people overlook in a contract are when the work is to begin and when it is to be completed.
- If you do not understand what you are signing, you should not sign it. Have an attorney review any documents before you sign them, including contracts, warranties and plans.
- Make sure there are no blank spaces on anything you sign. NEVER sign a blank document.
- Seek a referral from someone you know who is happy with his or her contractor's work. References provided by the contractor may not always be valid.
- Consider doing business with a local contractor. If something goes wrong, it may prove to be difficult to get something corrected if the contractor is from out of town, or out of state.
- Solicit bids from at least three contractors and be cautious of proposals that are much lower than any other proposals. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.
- Insist upon a written warranty on all materials provided and work performed.
- Get all building permits and variances before starting the project – and identify the contractor on the applications. If the contractor is to pull these permits, verify that they have been done and that the contractor is in compliance.
- Inspect all work before signing a completion certificate.
- Get a contractor's affidavit that all subcontractors and material suppliers have been paid.
- Report any misrepresentations, shoddy work, failure to honor contracts, unlicensed contractors, or other problems to the appropriate licensing board.

~ IDENTIFY A SCAM BEFORE A SCAM IDENTIFIES YOU! ~

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