

The Final Pick: After all your hard work, you have finally found your contractor! The contractor may use their written estimate as a final contract or may present the same information in a different document. As your project gets underway, here are a few things to consider:

› **Look carefully before you sign.**

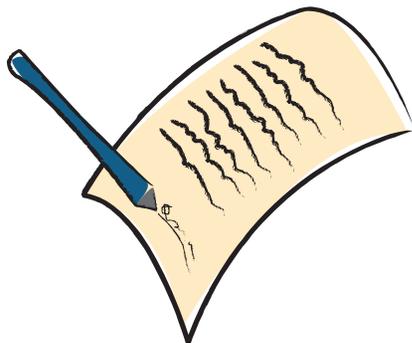
A complete contract should state clearly all tasks to be performed, all associated costs and the payment schedule. Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces. Guarantees made verbally by the contractor should be written into the contract. It should state how long the guarantee is valid, what it covers and who is responsible. Make sure to keep a copy of the contract and any receipts in a safe place with your home owner's manual.

› **Make final payments only when all work is completed to your satisfaction.**

A reputable contractor will not threaten you or pressure you to sign if the job is not finished properly.

› **Pay by check, not cash.**

Any legitimate contractor will work with you and accept a check or a cashier's check. Don't get pushed into anything else.



Watch Out!

For contractor scams...

- › **Avoid anybody who says they can speed up insurance payments or building permits.** They can't; or if they do, they are doing so illegally.
- › **Avoid anybody who wants a cash deposit or cash advance for payments in full.**
- › **Don't get rushed into a decision because you are responding to a disaster.** Scam artists love to prey on natural disaster victims or other high stress situations. Even though you may just want things fixed and back to normal NOW, do not rush into making a decision. Ask the same questions and go through the same process that you would at any other time. You do not want to make a bad situation worse.
- › **If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.** Be skeptical of low bids and great deals. Although price is important, professionalism and quality of workmanship should also be considered.

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The Better Business Bureau &
the Idaho Division of Building Safety Present:

CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

HVAC
Heating – Ventilation
Air Conditioning



Heating and cooling systems are some of the most important investments you'll make in your home. If you are like most people, almost half of your utility costs go to heating and cooling your home. When picking a contractor for your HVAC needs, there is a lot riding on the choices you make. More than your comfort and safety are at stake. So is your wallet!

How do you know who will treat you and your home right, give you a fair price and a job well done? The Better Business Bureau has teamed up with the Idaho Division of Building Safety to bring you these tips:



Make a List: First, get a list of contractor names to call and check out.

➤ **Ask for references.**

Friends and family may have some first-hand recommendations.

➤ **Check with the BBB.**

The BBB has great information on contractors in your area. Check bbb.org to get a list of HVAC contractors accredited by the BBB.

Make Some Calls: Your next job is to narrow down your list of contractors to 3-5. Start by calling each one and getting the following information:

➤ **Verification of licenses.**

Idaho requires all HVAC technicians to be tested and to keep their licenses up to date. Get the contractor's license number and check with the state to verify the license. Go to dbs.idaho.gov.

➤ **Verification of insurance.**

The contractor should carry general liability insurance and workers' compensation. If not, you may be liable for accidents that occur on your property.

➤ **References of former customers.**

Ask for the phone number of references and give them a call. Ask them if they were happy with the work done, if the contractor finished as planned, if the contractor left everything clean and if they would use the contractor again. If you found the name of the contractor through a friend or family member, ask the same questions.

Check out licensing information for contractors in Idaho at dbs.idaho.gov and click the active licenses link in the top right corner.



For more tips and information as well as help finding trusted businesses go to www.bbb.org.



Get An Estimate: Once you have the list narrowed down, set up times for free in-home estimates. Estimates should always be in writing and should always include a full description of the services to be provided.

➤ **If you are getting a new unit, the HVAC tech should do a load calculation.**

This includes looking at the old unit, the number and position of windows in your house, how much sunlight it gets, and the status of the insulation. If the contractor only looks at your old unit, or if he or she recommends a bigger unit 'to be on the safe side,' beware! The right unit is critical to keeping your house comfortable and your costs down.

➤ **While they are at your house, get a "read" on the person.**

Ask yourself "Is this somebody I trust?," "Can I work with them for an extended period of time?" and "Am I willing to let them into my home?"

➤ **Once you get the bid, ask questions.**

If one contractor's bid is substantially higher or lower than the others, ask why. They may have noticed something the others did not. If there is anything you don't understand, ask the contractor about it or ask a knowledgeable friend.