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What to Ask Before Hiring a Home Elevation Contractor?

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What To Ask Before Hiring A Home Elevation Contractor

It is highly recommended that homeowners interview several elevation contractors (and obtain written estimates) before hiring an elevation company, given the serious risks involved in the house raising process. The questions below can help provide information that will assist in that decision.

“May I have a copy of your contractor’s license?”

The contractor should be able to provide a copy of a current contractor’s license upon request. Make sure the license the company is licensed in the State of Louisiana and/or the Parish where the home to be elevated is located. Louisiana does not have a specific licensing process for home elevation and shoring contractors, meaning that any licensed contractor can legally elevate houses. Do not accept an Occupational License instead of a Contractor’s License, which is harder to obtain and maintain. A list of current licensed contractors is online at www.lslbc.louisiana.gov/findcontractor.asp. You can also call 225-765-2301.

“May I have the name of your insurance provider so I can verify your insurance?”

Shoring contractors should have general liability as well as workman’s compensation coverage. The insurance provider(s) will send proof of insurance directly to the homeowner upon request. Be sure to check the company name on the insurance certificate, and that the address listed is the correct address of the house to be elevated.

“Does your company carry supplemental insurance?”

Shoring contractors may carry “collapsible insurance” or extra insurance to address other potential losses during the course of work -- including Builders Risk insurance, which is recommended. If the contractor does not carry it, homeowners can take out a Builder’s Risk policy themselves to cover loss from accidents, natural disaster, or theft that may occur during the job. Builder’s Risk policies protect the homeowner from losses that the contractor’s insurance does not cover. Builder’s Risk policies may be obtained for renewable terms of three to six months at generally low cost relative to what they cover. The homeowner can name the contractor as an “additional insured” for added protection against loss.

“Does your shoring company use an engineer?”

A registered civil engineer is required by law to review, add a stamp of approval, and submit the scope of work to the local government, before the contractor can obtain an elevation permit. Homeowners can also independently hire an engineer specializing in residential structures (to review the work of the elevation contractor/engineer. The independent engineer can address any problems that may arise on behalf of the homeowner, and inspect the progress and quality of work as needed.) The homeowner is responsible for making sure that the appropriate permits are obtained in advance and posted at the jobsite. Engineers’ licenses can be checked at: www.lapels.com.

“How long have you been in business locally?”

Homeowners should know how much experience an elevation contractor has had in the local area. Because the local soil structure is unique, an experienced contractor with knowledge of the local soil is likely to be more familiar with particular problems that could occur. In addition, a local contractor may be available to address any future foundation problems. Contractors with only a Post Office box as an address should be investigated further.

“Can you provide references to jobs that I can go see?”

It can help to look at other work that a contractor has done for others to get an idea of the quality of work proposed for on your own house. It is wise to check out at least three local references to jobs in progress or already completed.

“What is the warranty or guarantee, in case of a construction problem?”

While many elevation contractors offer warranties, often only the individual foundation piers are covered. Resulting damage to the home may not be included. Better established companies may have the means to remedy problems if insurance does not come through, assuming the problem was the fault of the contractor. The Better Business Bureau provides mediation services as well as background information for BBB member contractors, including recent complaints and whether they have been resolved satisfactorily



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