

## Hire a Licensed Contractor

The Village wants to remind property owners to make sure that they are hiring licensed contractors. This is for safety and liability. Our Development Services Director, who performs building inspections cited a recent instance where an unlicensed person was hired to do electrical work. Live wires were left exposed near duct work which could have resulted in injury of an HVAC tech and/or a fire.

In the State of North Carolina, a general contractor must be licensed if the contract is valued at \$30,000 or higher. North Carolina law also requires all electrical, plumbing, and heating and air contractors and subcontractors to be licensed.

N.C. licensed contractors are professionals who have passed technical exams and have proven that they have the financial means to support their business. Should you experience a substantial problem with a licensed contractor, the State Licensing Board for that trade will investigate the complaint and if found valid, take appropriate action against the contractor.

Below are some tips for working with contractors to avoid any issues that could occur with any project (Source: NC Licensing Board for General Contractors website).

### 1. Plan your project

Plan out in detail what you want done and who you will need to complete it. No two projects are the same, and some may require a specially licensed contractor. Contact your local permitting office ([sboyett@villagebhi.org](mailto:sboyett@villagebhi.org) / 910-457-9700 ext. 1004 to see if permits are required to assure code compliance. Most licensed contractors know when permits are required.

### 2. Get several estimates

When comparing estimates from different contractors, don't just compare the bottom-line cost. Look at the cost, quantity, and quality of materials in each estimate. Be sure the estimate includes the total price, the materials to be used, a timetable for payments and the expected timeline for completion of the work.

### 3. Verify the contractor's license

You can check for proof that the contractor you may be working with is licensed by going to the NC Licensing Board for General Contractors website here:

<https://portal.ncibgc.org/Public/Search>. You can also call 919-571-4183. The required specialties licenses can be checked online or by phone for electricians

<https://www.ncbeec.org/> (919-733-9042), for plumbers, HVAC techs, and fire sprinkler installers <https://nclicensing.org/> (919-875-3612).

### 4. Check at least 3 references

Ask your contractor for written references. Contact each reference and ask if they were satisfied with the contractor's work and if the contractor kept to the schedule and contract terms.

**5. Require a written contract**

The contract should be a detailed description of the work to be done, the material to be used and the equipment to be installed. Be sure there is a schedule of payments and a timeline for when the work will be completed. Be sure you understand the contract before you sign it. Any changes that occur should be noted in writing.

**6. Don't make a large down payment**

The down payment you pay in order for work to begin should be minimal. Beware of contractors asking for a large down payment so that they can purchase the materials to begin your project.

**7. Make payments as work is completed**

Set up a payment schedule that follows the work as it is being completed. Never pay for something that has not been completed. Do not pay for anything in cash.

**8. Monitor the job in progress**

Check in regularly on the progress of the work. Permits should be displayed by the contractor while the work is being done.

**9. Don't make the final payment until the job is complete**

Before making the final payment make sure that you are satisfied with the completed work. Verify that all liens have been released.

**10. Keep all paperwork related to the job**

Be sure to keep a record of all documents that pertain to your project. This includes the contract, any written changes, all bills and invoices, receipts of payments and all correspondence with your contractor. You should also include photos of the job in progress.

**10 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CONTRACTORS**

**1** Hire only state-licensed contractors.

**2** Check a contractor's license number online at <https://portal.nclbgc.org> or call 919-571-4183.

**3** Get at least three bids.

**4** Get three references from each bidder and review past work in person.

**5** Make sure all project expectations are in writing and only sign the contract if you completely understand the terms.

**6** Confirm that the contractor has workers' compensation insurance for employees.

**7** Avoid paying 10% down or \$1,000, whichever is less. Avoid paying in cash.

**8** Avoid letting payments get ahead of work.

**9** Keep a job file of all papers relating to your project, including all payments.

**10** Avoid making the final payment until you are satisfied with the job.

VILLAGE OF BALDHEAD ISLAND