

Consumer Tips

on **Choosing** a Heating and Air Conditioning CONTRACTOR

Getting Estimates

Arrange for the contractor to come and inspect the job site. Some small jobs may be priced out and an estimate written immediately, but larger jobs may require additional time to price properly. A contractor should also complete a heat loss and heat gain calculation to determine the size of equipment that your home needs.

When comparing estimates, the statements about the work to be performed and the materials used should be of comparable quality, or the estimates should make proper allowances for any differences. Be sure that the estimate is in writing and includes the proper permits and licences. The warranty policy should be clearly stated for equipment, materials and labour. If the contractor uses sub-contractors for some of the actual work, these should be specified both in the proposal and in the contract.

The Contract

The contract is the agreement between you and the contractor that specifies what work will be performed and gives a firm dollar value on that work. It is a legal, binding document when signed by both parties, so be sure you understand and agree with the contents before signing. Any changes or additions in the work to be done should never be made without those alterations being written into the contract and initialed by both parties.

In addition to the name, address and telephone number of the consumer and the contractor, the contract should clearly state the following items:

- required permits that must be purchased by the contractor;
- responsibility for removal of old equipment and materials;
- warranties and guarantees on materials and labour;
- approximate start and completion dates unless specific dates and times are agreed upon; and
- price and terms of payment.

Insurance

It is important that the contractor and any sub-contractors each have public liability and property damage insurance, and be able to produce a certificate of good standing from the Workers' Compensation Board. You may wish to ask who the policy is with and follow up to verify that it is current.

Payment

Payment methods will vary to meet your preferences or needs, and may include financing, credit, cash or an equipment rental program. In any case, the payment schedule should be easy to understand and should clearly state what, if any, interest charges apply. Make sure to inquire about any applicable energy-efficiency rebates.

References

Reputable contractors will be more than willing to give you the names and addresses of customers they've done work for in your area. You may also wish to contact the Better Business Bureau, which maintains records of consumer complaints.



Choose contractors with proven credentials, and a track record of reliability and quality. Visit HRAI's online Contractor Locator at www.hrai.ca to find a member contractor in your area or contact the Call Centre at 1-877-467-HRAI (4724).

Finding Reputable Contractors

There are many ways to find a contractor to provide for your home comfort needs, but not all of them are equally effective. Personal referrals from trusted friends, family and/or colleagues are a good start, but you should also consider going directly to the industry's professional association for assistance.

Contractor companies that hold membership in the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) have been pre-screened to ensure that they possess the relevant trade licences, technical certifications and insurance coverage that you should expect from any contractor with which you would entrust the care of your home comfort system. Look for the HRAI Member Company logo when choosing a contractor. You can verify that they are a member by searching the HRAI online Contractor Locator at www.hrai.ca.

