



Regulated Industries Complaints Office

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cca.hawaii.gov/rico

ROOFING TIPS FOR OWNERS

There's nothing better than a good roof over your head. The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) and its Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO), offers the following information for you to consider about this important area.

When Your Roof Leaks...

- ✓ Call the original roofer first.
- ✓ Check your guarantee – you may still be covered. Ask for the original roofing contractor's opinion and advice. Ask questions.
- ✓ Get opinions and advice from other roofing contractors. Listen with care and skepticism. Sales agents acting for roofing companies do not always have technical knowledge. Compare and evaluate the various opinions and advice; then make your decision.
- ✓ When you have decided what type of roof you want, get estimates from three or more roofing contractors. Compare the prices and what you will receive for what you pay. Keep in mind the cheapest estimate may not necessarily be the best.
- ✓ Consider the "tie-in" of different types of roofing materials or levels. Adding a flat patio roof to a shingle roof is one common example of where future leakage may occur even with the best of workmanship. Where a flat roof butts into a pitched roof, the "tie-in" area should be made waterproof at the junction. Problems may develop due to the different types of roofing materials that meet at the "tie-in." Additional "tie-in" problems may develop where existing roofing connects with new roofing of a different material.
- ✓ Stay off your roof unless it is absolutely necessary. When you walk on the roof, your weight may cause cracking, especially to older materials or may void your warranty.
- ✓ If there is no emergency involved, wait for good weather when contractors are not as busy. You'll likely get better prices and a less hurried job.

Read and Understand Your Roofing Guarantee. In roofing, there are usually two guarantees – the manufacturer's and the contractor's.

- ✓ Most guarantees from manufacturers are for merchantability – the product is what they say it is. This has nothing to do with the way it performs.
- ✓ Contractor guarantees usually have to do with workmanship and usually apply only to water tightness and not appearance. Any contractor's guarantee that is valid for a period greater than seven (7) years must be accompanied by a bond.

Know the terms of your guarantee:

- ✓ Is it transferable to the next owner?
- ✓ Does it call for maintenance on your part?
- ✓ Is it cancelled if the roof is penetrated in any way, like adding solar energy devices?

REMEMBER: A guarantee is only as good as the company that issues it. If the company goes out of business, your guarantee becomes ineffective.

The right license for the job. It's important to hire the right kind of contractor for your particular job. If you're just putting on a new roof, a specialty roofing contractor may be for you. If your job includes more than two specialties, (for example, an extension requiring framing, flooring, drywall, *and* roofing), you should consider hiring a general contractor. A general contractor will be licensed to do most of the work and will hire licensed subcontractors to take care of any specialty work for which he/she isn't licensed to do.

If you're considering solar, make sure your roof is ready. The time to check and replace your roof is before you install a solar system, not after. You want to make sure your roof is in good condition before you start. And remember, most photovoltaic racking systems require roof penetrations, so if your roof is under warranty, work with your roofing contractor and/or manufacturer, so the installation of your new photovoltaic system does not void any warranties you may have. If you belong to a homeowners association, check out Hawaii Revised Statutes §196-7 – additional disclosures and requirements apply.

There are lots of good reasons why a consumer should consider hiring a licensed contractor, including:

- ✓ **Training and experience.** In order to qualify for a contractor's license, applicants must demonstrate they have the necessary training and experience to get a contractor's license. The Contractors License Board also requires applicants demonstrate "a good reputation for honesty, truthfulness, financial integrity and fair dealing," submit tax clearances, proof of insurance, and other required qualifications.
- ✓ **Insurance.** Insurance is important because a lot can happen on a construction project - accidents, falling objects - not to mention fire, vandalism, malicious mischief, and theft of building items. Licensed contractors are required to carry liability insurance and are responsible if a worker is injured on a jobsite. This protects you as a homeowner from putting your property at risk if anything is damaged on your project or if anyone is injured.
- ✓ **Obtain required permits.** Licensed contractors are able to apply for and obtain building permits. If an unlicensed contractor is asking you to apply for an owner-builder permit, it may be because they can't get a building permit for you. For information about building, electrical, and plumbing permits, contact the planning and permitting department for your county.
- ✓ **Contractors Recovery Fund.** The Contractors Recovery Fund helps to compensate homeowners if something goes wrong with their project. The Contractor's Recovery Fund is only available to consumers who have hired a licensed general contractor. *(For information about the Contractor's Recovery Fund, or if you have questions about what kind of a contractor you may want to hire, call the Contractor's License Board at [808] 586-2700.)*

Each year, RICO receives hundreds of tips and complaints about unlicensed contractors. The complaints range from construction that has been poorly done, to money being taken and no work being done at all. Unlicensed contractors may go door-to-door claiming they "just finished a job down the street," or "have materials left over from another job." Unlicensed contractors may even use a fake license number or a license number that belongs to someone else. So, remember to check license information with our office. You may also want to ask to see a picture I.D. so you know exactly who you're dealing with. And, most importantly, remember...never pay all of the money up front. Your home is the single biggest investment you'll probably ever make, so take your time, do your homework, and consider hiring a licensed contractor. To check licensing status or for information about hiring a licensed professional, call the Consumer Resource Center (CRC) at 587-4272 or visit the State's website at: **cca.hawaii.gov/rico**.