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ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Building a Home? Here's your Contractor Checklist

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Our office has represented contractors, subcontractors and suppliers in the construction industry for over 30 years. They are a great group of hard-working people. Because of our many relationships, we are often asked, by homeowners who have become dissatisfied in the construction process, to look at issues involving contractors, subcontractors and suppliers who we don't represent. Here are a few tips to avoid a disappointing experience in the construction of a new home, or a remodel of your existing home:

GET REFERENCES! Ask for the names of the last 3-6 people for whom they did work, and call them. Ask specifically if the contractor or subcontractor communicated well with them during the process and kept them informed. The biggest problems we see often deal with a lack of communication.

LICENSED? Make sure the contractor or subcontractor is properly licensed. While you are checking on their license, ask if they are bonded.

GET ESTIMATES. Ask other comparable contractors or subcontractors for estimates. If you were to contemplate major surgery, you would probably seek a second opinion. The same holds true in the construction industry. Make sure you understand the proposed contract, and what you are paying for (and not paying for).

PAYMENT. Don't pay for everything up front! Require the contractor or subcontractor to provide you with a detailed sworn statement of expenses, justifying the payment, as well as corresponding lien waivers for other subcontractors and suppliers. This is important to protect you as the owner with respect to construction liens.

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT. Look at the penalty, guaranty, and warranty provisions. Talk to a lawyer so you understand the risks and how certain contract terms can play out in a construction process.

DO YOUR RESEARCH. Be an informed owner and find out all you can about the construction process before you begin.

COMMUNICATE! Communicate well and work to resolve any issues as they arise. The contractor and subcontractors genuinely want you to be a happy customer, so communicate with your contractor or subcontractor to work through issues.

If you end up talking to a lawyer after a disappointing construction experience, it's likely due to a breakdown over one of these issues. And if you really want to know, pick up the phone and call us – we'll counsel you through the process and also give you some good references of contractors and subcontractors that we would trust with our own homes.