



Repairing homes after the Alberta wildfires

Tips on hiring a contractor and signing a contract

As Albertans return to communities after the wildfires, they may need to hire a contractor to repair or renovate their homes resulting from fire or smoke damage.

Prepaid contractors

Contractors who require a deposit before all the work is complete, and enter into a contract away from their place of business are considered prepaid contracting businesses and require a licence from Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

Prepaid contractors must be licensed to conduct business in Alberta. You can check if the contractor has a licence by using the search tool at: www.servicealberta.ca/find-if-business-is-licenced.cfm.

Businesses whose contracts are covered by specified warranty programs may be exempt from licensing. Be sure to ask about the contractor's licensing status before signing a contract or paying any money.

Before hiring a contractor, do your homework

- Check if a business/individual has had past enforcement action taken against them following this link: www.alberta.ca/lookup/business-enforcement-search-tool.aspx.
- Contact your local Better Business Bureau to check reliability reports for information about a specific company's complaint history: www.bbb.org
- Get written estimates from at least three contractors.
- Always insist on a written contract as verbal contracts are hard to prove if a dispute arises.
- Ask for references that you can contact to evaluate the contractor and the quality of their work.
- Provide each business with a detailed description of the work you want completed and the materials you want the contractor to use.

Beware of contractors who:

- grossly overcharge for their services
- quote a price without seeing your property
- refuse to give you a written contract outlining what they will do
- will not allow you to get other estimates
- use a post office box as their mailing address or an answering service for a telephone number
- will not commit to a specific start and completion date
- demand large down payments to buy materials, or use other pressure tactics
- offer a special price
- promise a discount if you allow them to use your home to advertise their work (the contractor has probably made the same offer to everyone).

For more information call 310-4455

©2023 Government of Alberta | June 9, 2023 | Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

Classification: Public



Written estimates should include:

- a complete description of the work that will be done
- the type and quality of materials that will be used
- the project start and completion dates
- itemized costs and the total price
- a statement of any guarantees made by the contractor
- the required method of payment.

Cancelling a contract

Consumers have the right to cancel prepaid contracts within 10 days of receiving a copy of the signed contract and have extended cancellation rights if the prepaid contractor is not licensed, the contract does not conform to the requirements under the *Consumer Protection Act*, or the goods or services were not all provided within 30 days of the delivery date specified in the contract. For more information, visit <https://www.alberta.ca/hiring-contractor.aspx>.

Filing a complaint

If you believe a prepaid contractor isn't licensed, has not followed the requirements under the *Consumer Protection Act*, or not fulfilled the obligations of your contract, you can file a complaint at www.alberta.ca/file-consumer-complaint.aspx.

For more information:

- The **Consumer protection** page (www.alberta.ca/consumer-protection.aspx) has information about the Consumer Investigations Unit and the laws that protect consumers.
- The **Consumer and business tips** page (www.alberta.ca/consumer-business-tips.aspx) contains an online library of tipsheets on a variety of issues, including home improvements. (open.alberta.ca/publications/home-improvements-what-you-need-to-know).
- In the event that you find yourself in a situation where you may wish to build a new home, the **Residential builder licensing** page has information on licensing and permitting for the construction of new homes (www.alberta.ca/builder-licensing.aspx).