

# Recovery After the Maui Fire: Hiring Contractors

As Maui begins recovery after the devastating effects of the wildfire, local home builders want residents to be aware of scammers that may pose as legitimate contractors. BIA Hawaii suggests that residents research contractors to avoid negative experiences and unnecessary expenses.

BIA Hawaii recommends the following tips when hiring a contractor:

- Ask for proof of a current license and registration from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) or similar local government building department.
- Make sure the contractor provides information on timing and fees for permitting and working with the local building department. In Hawaii, projects are required to be permitted and inspected.
- Check references – both clients and trade partners.
- Ask specific questions about timeliness, communication, follow through and if they would work with them again.
- Contact the Better Business Bureau at the [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) for any history of unsatisfied complaints.
- Be wary of low bids or unbelievable deals– the lowest bid is not always the best and is a red flag if the bid is significantly less than other contractors.
- Think apples-to-apples: For multiple bids, be sure to read through the estimates and compare similar scopes of work with similar materials and labor.
- Understand the contract and warranties that the contractor will provide for the work performed.
- Contracts should outline the scope of the work, the price and at what points of completion payment is due.
- Be extra wary of a contractor who wants full or cash payments before the job begins and utilizes high pressure sales tactics to sign a contract.

Questions to ask yourself and your contractor:

- Are you able to communicate with the builder? Remember you will be in close contact with them throughout the construction process and afterward as you live in your new home. Does it feel like a good fit? Do they listen to you?
- Have you seen any projects or the builder's work, both completed and in progress? Check for quality of workmanship and materials. Do they have a quality control program in place to assure the best quality job?
- Does the builder have Workers' Compensation and General Liability insurance? A Builders' Risk policy? If not, you may be liable for accidents on your property. A reputable contractor should be able to provide insurance certificates and don't feel bad- professionals expect you to ask for them.
- Does the builder have a safety program with associated employee training in place? Not only is this a reflection of professionalism it may result in cost savings to you through reduced insurance premiums.
- Does the contractor have a permanent location and a good reputation with local banks and suppliers?
- How long have they been in the building business? It usually takes three to five years to establish a financially sound business. Will they be around after your construction is complete to service warranties? What is their standard warranty duration and what is included in that coverage?
- Does the builder utilize a project schedule? This helps with the planning process and eliminates surprises.
- Do they exceed state and local codes or simply comply with minimum requirements?
- Do their employees and trade partners participate in continuing education and training programs? Are they current on changing industry trends and requirements?

Visit the BIA at [biahawaii.org](http://biahawaii.org) for more information and for a listing of licensed **local** professionals.

