

Are You Asking Your Contractor the Right Questions?

NARI Offers Homeowners Tips to Avoid Home Remodeling Fraud

The National Association of the Remodeling Industry, (NARI) "*The Voice of the Remodeling Industry*"TM, shares a short list of questions asked by homeowners during a remodeling project – as well as the questions many homeowners forget to ask.

You would think that launching an entire remodeling project would spark a truckload of questions from wary homeowners who have heard the horror stories surrounding the world of remodeling. Surprisingly, though, contractor members of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) admit they aren't asked enough questions.

"Timing and money are the most common questions we hear," says NARI Past President Mark Brick, CR, CGR, and president of B & E General Contractors in Glendale, Wisc. "During an interview with a homeowner, homeowners should be asking about credentials and verifying business practices, rather than 'When can you start? When will it be finished?' and 'How much will it cost?'"

These few questions simply aren't enough. If a homeowner wishes to have a successful remodeling project, they should learn the right questions to ask and how to ask them. Other popular queries homeowners pose are: "What time will you knock on my door each morning?" "What time will you quit for the day?" "Are you going to work everyday?" "Can you finish before (insert any major holiday or significant family event)?" and "How much will it cost per square foot?"

While these questions are important, they shouldn't be the primary focus for choosing a professional remodeler.

"A reasonable timetable is important," says Brick, "but it shouldn't be the primary focus of an interview or a job, and neither should budget. Homeowners should focus on trust and quality. If you find someone who is reputable and trustworthy, the budget and timeline will fall into place."

Homeowners should start by asking questions about a company's business practices and experience in a similar type of project. If you decide you want to hire a particular contractor, then you can discuss when he or she can start, what time he or she can knock on your door each morning and when you will have your home to yourselves again. These are all items that can be discussed at a pre-remodeling meeting.

Here are some of the questions NARI recommends you ask before signing a remodeling contract:

- How long have you been in business?
- Who will be assigned as project supervisor for the job?
- Who will be working on the project? Are they employees or subcontractors?
- What is your approach to a project such as this?
- How many projects like mine have you completed in the past year?
- May I have a list of reference from those projects?
- May I have a list of business referrals or suppliers?
- What percentage of your business is repeat or referral business?
- Are you a member of a national trade association?

- Does your company carry workers compensation and liability insurance? A homeowner should always verify this information by calling the insurance agency. A copy of an insurance certificate does not let you know if the policy is still current, even if the certificate has an expiration date. The insurance policy may have been canceled by either party.
- If licensing is required in their state, a homeowner should also ask if the contractor is licensed and call to verify compliance with the law. Not all states offer or require licensing, though. Homeowners should check with local or state government agencies.
- Have you or your employees been certified in remodeling or had any special training or education, such as earning a Certified Remodeler (CR), Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR) Certified Remodeler Specialist (CRS) or Certified Lead Carpenter (CLC) or Certified Kitchen & Bath Remodeler (CKBR) designation?

It's also important to realize that sometimes it's not the answers that are significant, but what the contractor leaves out. Sometimes asking the right questions is not enough, and homeowners need to pay attention to their instincts and to what information is missing.

Remodeling can be a fun experience. You get to create your dream room or home and learn a little about design and building along the way. All you need to do is ask questions. Questions that, according to NARI members, remodelers don't feel that are getting enough of. So tap into your curiosity and ask away.

NARI is a professional association whose member companies voluntarily subscribe to a strict code of ethics. Consumers can search www.trustnari.org to find a remodeler who is a member of NARI of Central Ohio.

For more information about finding a qualified remodeling professional, consumers can call the NARI National hotline at 800-611-NARI and request a free copy of NARI's brochure, "How to Select a Remodeling Professional," or visit www.RemodelToday.com and download the brochure - click on the homeowners guide for more information.

###

The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) is the only trade association dedicated solely to the remodeling industry. With more than 8,000 member companies nationwide, the Association -- based in Des Plaines, Illinois, -- is "*The Voice of the Remodeling Industry*"TM. For membership information or to find a contractor in your area, visit NARI's website at www.RemodelToday.com, or contact the national headquarters office at 800-611-NARI. For information in Central Ohio call NARI of Central Ohio at (614) 895-3080 or visit www.trustnari.org.