SELECTING A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR

Decisions on hiring contractors should be made carefully. Try to get at least three bids from different contractors. Although it is tempting to hire the contractor who submits the lowest bid, there are other factors to consider.

Experience
The failure of most contractors is poor work habits and shoddy business practices according to the Small Business Administration. When possible, choose a contractor with a minimum of five years of experience.

License
Contractors should be licensed by the state. While the license alone doesn't guarantee an excellent contractor, it is one way to weed out unlicensed contractors. Some states also record complaints filed against contractors. You may look these up using the contractor's license number with the State of Michigan at www.michigan.gov.

Insurance
The contractor is required to carry worker's compensation and general liability insurance. Proof of insurance makes the contractor liable for injuries suffered on the job. Ask to see copies of the contractor's insurance policies.

References
To judge the quality of a contractor and the products they use, ask for customer references. Obtain the names and contact information of recent clients.

GETTING A BID

To get comparable bids from potential contractors, determine your project's specifications and provide them to each contractor submitting a bid. This will make it easier for you to compare the bids because all of the contractors will be using the same information.
For Example:

Furnace
Replace with a 95% plus rated high efficiency model with an electronically commuted motor (ECM). Make sure to compare similar models in efficiency.

Central Air Conditioner
If you're buying a new central air conditioner, consider efficiency and operation costs in your decision. The efficiency of central air conditioners is measured with a SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ration) rating. A 15.0 SEER or higher unit is best.

Attic Insulation
Add 12 inches of blown loose-fill insulation to increase attic insulation value from R-11 to R-49. Approximate area to be insulated is 1,500 square feet of attic area. You need one square foot of ventilation for every 300 square feet of attic area. This attic would need five square feet of ventilation.