

Safely Planning & Executing Your Next Home Improvement Project

Are you thinking of a home improvement or home service project? Interest in projects spike starting in March and range from landscaping, to renovations, to major appliance replacements. What do you need to know to safely plan, budget and execute your next major project? The Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) provides these tips:

- ✓ Nearly every home improvement or home repair requires some form of State or County license. Most of the licenses are issued by the Department of Labor and are searchable: <https://labor.maryland.gov/license/> But other agencies have licensing authority too for such things as pest control, tree removal, etc.
- ✓ Most home renovations or major repairs require a permit. If you are told your job doesn't require a permit, contact the Howard County Department of Inspections, Licenses & Permits at 410-313-2455 and verify. No permit, no safety inspection.
- ✓ Anyone knocking on your door to sell you a project must *at least* have the County's door-to-door sales ID issued by OCP. The State has additional licensing requirements for home improvement sales.
- ✓ **Before you sign:**
 - Get 3 estimates.
 - Do your research on the company and read recent reviews.
 - Get a detailed contract that doesn't front load payments.
- ✓ Beware of these common red flags
 - No good contractor has "extra" supplies
 - No home repair is "free" through your insurance policy
 - The contract is missing the business name, logo, contact information, or details required by law.
 - They ask for a deposit greater than 1/3 of the project price.
 - Payment is demanded by wire, payment app, check or cash—or demanded faster than the contract payment plan.

Not sure what credentials or permits are needed? Not sure if the contract you're offered has all the required information? Contact the OCP at consumer@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-6420.

Social Media Option for Villages:

Are you planning any major projects around the house? Do you know how to safely plan and execute that project? Check out @HoCoConsumer's tips before you sign on the dotted line.

You can then refer your followers to [this flyer](#) or [this webinar](#). Depending on when you send this out, there's a [live webinar](#) on April 30. Graphics option:

