

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Don't Get Fenced In By The Wrong Contractor

(NAPSA)—Home sweet home can be even sweeter with just the right fence to frame it or an enjoyable deck to enhance your yard.

But before you hire a fence or deck contractor to make this addition, make sure he's qualified to do a good job.

The American Fence Association (AFA) recommends homeowners follow a few simple guidelines when selecting a qualified and reputable fence or deck contractor:

Written Contracts—Homeowners should insist that the contractor provide a clear, written contract that outlines the work to be done, specific materials to be used, start and projected completion dates, and the price to protect them if the contractor fails to complete part of the agreed-upon work.

Product Samples—The contractor should have product samples for homeowners to see and touch to confirm that they are getting the materials they want. While less expensive products may be available, choosing materials that conform to the American Society of Testing and Materials' (ASTM) minimum standards helps assure longevity and durability.

Certificates of Insurance—Reputable contractors are fully insured. Ask to see a copy of the contractor's proof of liability insurance and bonding for verification.

References—Reliable contractors should be happy to give you references. Request and contact at least three of them, asking:

- Were they satisfied with their fence or deck?
- Was the job completed on time?



Contractors should provide product samples for homeowners to see and touch.

- If there were delays, were there good reasons?
- Was the contractor responsive to questions and concerns?
- Would they use the contractor again?

Some homeowners may also choose to view other projects the contractor has finished.

AFA member fence and deck contractors should be able to provide all of the above. Through continuing education programs, they remain up-to-date on the latest styles and materials as well as new and better installation techniques. Many AFA contractors take customer satisfaction a step further by becoming a Certified Fence Professional (CFP). Those who successfully complete the program may use the CFP designation for three years, and then must recertify to maintain their CFP status.

To search for an AFA fence or deck contractor, visit the American Fence Association Web site at www.AmericanFenceAssociation.com or call 800-822-4342.