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Selecting an Engineer, Architect or Contractor



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Beginning the Selection

Selecting an engineer, architect, or contractor is an important step in a building project. You will want to obtain the names of several firms or individuals, and from more than one source.

One good way to get names is to ask for recommendations from friends or acquaintances who recently had the type of work you need performed. You can also look in the yellow pages of the telephone directory or internet under “Engineers,” or “Architects” for individuals or firms. Contractors also frequently advertise in the classified section of the newspaper.

Once you have a list of possible firms or individuals, you should meet with them, discuss your project, and their compatibility in working with you.

Questions to Ask

- Do you have a valid California License as an Engineer, Architect or Contractor?
- What types of insurance do you have?
- How long have you been in business?
- How many persons are in your firm?
- Have you worked on projects similar to mine?
- May I see examples of your work?
- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of owners of the examples? Or references from previous customers.
- What services will you provide versus what you will subcontract to others?
- What will the fees or costs be?
- Can you meet my schedule?

Call to Verify

After the interviews, check with the appropriate licensing board and verify the status of the firm or individual.

The California Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors
(916) 263-2222 Toll Free (866) 780-5370 www.bpelsq.ca.gov

California Architectural Board (916) 574-7220 www.cab.ca.gov

Contractors State License Board (800) 321-2752 www.cslb.ca.gov

Very Important...

In addition to the previous items when selecting a contractor, make sure there is workers' compensation and liability insurance coverage. Ask the contractor if the company is insured against claims covering workers' compensation, property damage, and personal liability in case of accidents. Ask to see a copy of the certificate of insurance or ask for the name of the contractor's insurance carrier and agency to verify that the contractor has this insurance. In California, workers' compensation insurance coverage for contractors is required by law.

This is important for a homeowner because, if a worker is injured while working on a property and the contractor does not have insurance, the property owner will be required to pay the injured worker's medical bills and for rehabilitation, if necessary.