

Selecting a qualified roofing professional

Building owners should invest time in choosing a contractor

by **Katie Morrison**,
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There is a trend toward quality over price," says Jackie Cunningham, secretary/treasurer of Standard Roofing and Sheet Metal Inc., Jackson, Miss. "People are not always choosing the lowest bid anymore."

When it comes to roofing, the importance of selecting a qualified professional cannot be underestimated. Extra time spent gathering information on companies can save owners from costly repairs later.

Choosing a roofing contractor should be based on more than the lowest bid. Price is only one of many qualifications that owners should consider.

Reid Ribble, president of Security Roofing and Siding Co., Menasha, Wis., says professional roofing contractors may cost more because of the quality roof systems they install and top-notch work they perform. "Owners are realizing that they get what they pay for."

But choosing a qualified roofing contractor is not always easy. Following are some areas for owners to research before selecting a contractor:

- *A permanent place of business.* As simple as it sounds, this is the key to making sure the contractor is well-established with a permanent address, telephone number, tax identification and, where required, a business license.
- *Knowledge of various roof systems.* A professional contractor will be able to help consumers choose the right roof systems for their buildings and

budgets, using quality materials produced by reputable manufacturers. In addition, customers should feel comfortable with the roof system the contractor recommends.

- *Proof of insurance and an effective safety program.* Building owners should ask for proof of the insurance the contractor carries and should make sure that it includes workers' compensation and general liability coverage. In addition, a professional contractor will have a safety program in place.
- *Continuing industry education.* Professional roofing contractors attend seminars, conferences and trade shows offered by industry associations and groups. They employ trained workers who understand the importance of quality.
- *Financial stability.* Owners should choose a firm that is financially stable. They should ask to see the company's financial statements and the name of the auditing firm preparing the statements.
- *A written proposal.* The contractor should provide a written proposal outlining the project details. Building owners should read it carefully to make sure it's complete and fair.
- *Licensed and/or bonded.* Many states require that roofing contractors be licensed; many contractors are bonded by surety companies. Owners should ask for the contractor's license number and evidence of bonding ability.

- *Warranties.* Contractors should provide warranties to protect the building owner's investment.

"[Building owners] have to look at more than just the number of years a manufacturer's warranty is good for," says Johnny Zamrzla, president of Western Pacific Roofing Corp., Palmdale, Calif. "A professional roofing contractor will take the time to point out what is and isn't covered by the warranty."

- *References.* Building owners should ask for names and telephone numbers of the roofing contractor's recent clients. Then, they should find out if the clients are completely satisfied with the work.

Bob Dalsin, president of John A. Dalsin & Son Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., says his company's good reputation stems from good references. "The first thing that demonstrates you are professional is a good reputation."

- *A maintenance program.* After the work is completed, professional roofing contractors will follow up with periodic inspections to ensure that potential trouble spots are fixed.

Researching roofing companies may not be foolproof for hiring a professional, but it can help building owners make the best possible decision. Customer trust is important to professional roofing contractors, and they will be happy to provide the necessary assurances that they are indeed professional. **PR**