

How To Select A Radon Contractor

Get Estimates

Choose a contractor to fix a radon problem just as carefully as you would choose someone to do other home repairs. Be sure to choose a contractor certified by the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA / www.radongas.com) or the National Radon Safety Board (NRSB / www.nrsb.org). Get more than one estimate, ask for references, and contact some of those references to ask if they are satisfied with the contractor's work. You may also call the Radon Educator in your area for more information. In Hall and surrounding counties, contact Ginger Bennett at 706/265-2442, 770/535-8190 or bennettg@uga.edu.

Use this check-list when evaluating and comparing contractors and ask the following questions:

YES NO

- Will the contractor provide references and photographs, as well as test results of 'before' and 'after' radon levels of past radon reduction work?
- Can the contractor explain what the work will involve, how long it will take to complete, and exactly how the radon reduction system will work?
- Does the contractor charge a fee for any diagnostic tests? Although many contractors give free estimates, they may charge for diagnostic tests. These tests help determine what type of radon reduction system should be used and in some cases are necessary, especially if the contractor is unfamiliar with the type of house structure or the anticipated degree of difficulty.
- Did the contractor thoroughly inspect your home's structure before giving you an estimate?
- Did the contractor review the quality of your radon measurement results and determine if appropriate testing procedures were followed?

Compare the estimates you receive and consider what you will get for your money, taking into account:

- (1) a less expensive system may cost more to operate and maintain;
- (2) a less expensive system may have less aesthetic appeal;
- (3) a more expensive system may be best for your house; and,
- (4) the quality of the material and equipment installed will affect how long the system lasts.

Do the contractors' proposals and estimates include:

YES NO

- Proof of state certification and/or professional proficiency or certification credentials? (See current list of NEHA certified mitigators in Georgia.)
- Proof of liability insurance and being bonded, and having all necessary licenses to satisfy local requirements? (Ask to see a current certificate of insurance.)
- Diagnostic testing prior to design and installation of a radon reduction system?
- Installation of a warning device to caution you if the radon reduction system is not working correctly?
- Testing after installation to make sure the radon reduction system works well?
- A guarantee to reduce radon levels to 4 pCi/L or below, and if so, for how long?

The Radon Mitigation Contract

Ask the contractor to prepare a contract before any work starts. Carefully read the contract before you sign it. Make sure everything in the contract matches the original proposal. The contract should describe exactly what work will be done prior to and during the installation of the mitigation system, what the system consists of, and how the system will operate. Many contractors provide a guarantee that they will adjust or modify the system to reach a negotiated radon level. Carefully read the conditions of the contract describing the guarantee. Carefully consider optional additions to your contract which may add to the initial cost of the system, but may be worth the extra expense. Typical options might include an extended warranty, a service plan, and/or improved aesthetics.

Important information that should appear in the contract includes:

- The total cost of the job, including all taxes and permit fees; how much, if any, is required for a deposit; and when payment is due in full.
- The time needed to complete the work.
- An agreement by the contractor to obtain necessary permits and follow required building codes.
- A statement that the contractor carries liability insurance and is bonded and insured to protect you in case of injury to persons, or damage to property, while the work is done.
- A guarantee that the contractor will be responsible for damage and clean-up after the job.
- Details of any guarantee to reduce radon below a negotiated level.
- Details of warranties or other optional features associated with the hardware components of the mitigation system.
- A declaration stating whether any warranties or guarantees are transferable if you sell your home.
- A description of what the contractor expects the homeowner to do (e.g., make the work area accessible) before work begins.

Key Requirements for Radon Mitigation

The EPA recommends using a qualified contractor who will install the system in accordance with the U.S. EPA's Radon Mitigation Standards if no local building codes exist. The EPA model standards provide helpful, specific guidance. For example:

- The discharge shall be at least 10 feet above grade, 10 feet away from any opening that is less than two feet below the discharge, and above or at the eave of the roof.
- The piping may also be routed up the outside the home, but the discharge must still meet the above criteria.
- System fans should not be located inside the home or in a crawlspace. They can be in an attic, outdoors, or in a garage, provided there is no living space above the garage.
- There should be an indicator located in a prominent location that will easily indicate to the occupant that the system is functioning properly.
- Power to the fan should be run in accordance with local electric codes; including permits where required.
- All portions of the system are to be labeled and a simple instruction manual, with warranties, provided to the homeowner.
- All homes with mitigation systems should be retested no sooner than 24 hours (no later than 30 days) after installation to verify reduction. The home should also be retested every two years.