

Looking For a Good Contractor?

Whether you're shopping for a new heating and cooling system or making an emergency purchase because that "excuse for a furnace" finally conked out, there's a lot riding on the choices you are about to make. And, of all the choices you'll make, one of the most important is the first one: finding the right contractor.

The contractor is the linchpin of a quality installation. Get the right one and you'll reap the comfort and energy-saving benefits of a correctly sized and installed system operating at peak efficiency. Choose the wrong contractor who installs oversized equipment and your new system's efficiency and comfort will not meet your expectations. Because finding the right contractor is so important, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR® program has compiled the following recommendations to help you make this selection.

1 FIND THE RIGHT CONTRACTOR

A reputable contractor should always:

- Inspect the job on-site and provide a detailed bid in a timely manner.
- Be licensed and insured to conduct business in your area.
- Show their certification for refrigerant handling.
- Provide examples of other quality installation work, with customer names to contact.
- Ideally, have service technicians that are certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE). A list of contractors with certified technicians is at www.natex.org.

For complete information on keeping your home comfortable year-round, get the ENERGY STAR Guide to Energy-Efficient Cooling and Heating at www.energystar.gov/homeimprovement or 1-888-STAR-YES (1-888-782-7937).

2 GET QUALITY AND VALUE

The contractor should:

- Show you a layout of where the equipment will be installed.
- Calculate the size of your new equipment using Manual J or an equivalent calculation tool.
- Show savings calculations for installing high-efficiency, ENERGY STAR qualified equipment.
- Diagnose needed duct repairs.
- Provide financing for the purchase, if necessary.
- Explain clearly how to properly operate the system.
- List in detail all the work that is being contracted.
- Specify all products by quantity, name, model number, and energy ratings.
- Provide and explain manufacturer's warranty and the labor warranty the contractor will stand behind.

3 SIGN AN AGREEMENT

You and your contractor should sign a written proposal before work starts that includes:

- The total price and payment schedule.
- The scheduled start and completion date.
- A description of how disputes will be resolved.
- The contractor's liability insurance and licenses if required.
- List of paperwork and permits needed for the project.

