

Avoiding Building Repair Rip Offs

Commercial Office Buildings are complex. And maintaining them adequately can be challenging. Building repairs can be complicated or simple, but all repair projects share some common problems.

For example, hiring someone to make a repair, particularly one requiring a specialist, can be difficult to manage if you are not well versed in the engineering aspects.

The following tips can help make your management of the project easier by preventing, avoiding and preparing for issues before they arise.

- Before work begins, clearly define the work that you need to have completed. The clearer your outline of work is, the smoother the job will go. Avoid loose specifications as much as possible (on both materials and work to be done).
- Communicate your ideas to contractor and give them a copy of the outline of work you developed. Make sure they understand it fully. Ask for collaboration, and see if they can provide feedback on items that could save you money. Discuss the quality of materials needed, and what labor resources will be necessary.
- On larger jobs, research the contractor's finances, credit, insurance, and staff. Feel free to ask for references and locations where they have completed work in the past. You might even visit those job sites to inspect the quality of work.
- Be aware of and avoid, if possible, "low-ball" bids. Sometimes the cheapest bidder is cutting corners on the project and might even violate code requirements in your area. Negotiate a schedule of extras. Another common ploy is to low-ball the bid to get the job and flood the company with small extras. Make sure to add clauses in your work agreement that explain "all extras not included in the original price must be agreed to in writing prior to the commencement of the work." Be sure to keep a complete set of copies of the contract.
- Be sure to include and clearly define deduction clauses in the contract. These clauses would include debris removal, clean-up, and the passing of firm completion dates. Define what you will charge back to the contractor and when you will charge it if necessary.
- Always negotiate cancellation clauses in the contract. This should not be a problem since it serves both parties involved. It protects you from poor work and protects the contractor from late payments. How and why the contract can be cancelled need to be spelled out here. Otherwise you make find yourself with a mechanic's lien over an inadequate job after you did not pay the final payment.
- On all contracts, but especially with ongoing service bids, obtain references from the contractor that relate directly to the work you need to have completed. Call or if possible visit the provided references on site and ask them to rate the following on a scale of 1-10: Punctuality, Competency/Knowledge, Pricing, Reliability, Emergency Response Time, and their Overall rating.
- Be thorough about who is responsible for what: permits, plans, who will supply what, unloading sites, property rules (safety, user contact, clean-up, security, keys etc.). An agreement should be reached that explains how the work site should be left at the end of each working day. This document should include who is responsible for locking up at the end of each working day, cleaning, and debris removal, and traffic management if necessary.
- A very important aspect that is often overlooked is insurance. Look into the contractor's insurance policies and come to an agreement about what happens if your property, or a neighbor's property is damaged as a result of the work being performed. Make it a requirement that there is an up to date certificate of insurance. Check with your attorney or insurance specialist about what should be covered on your property.
- Clearly define work performance and what requirements the final work should meet. An example clause that could be added to the contract would be: "All work is expected to be done in compliance with all applicable city, county and state regulations and in a professional manner."
- Prepare the area to be worked on. Remove as much as possible to avoid breakage and theft. If indicated isolate area so contractors have no reason to wander around.
- Manage the contractor. Keep a record of the job as it unfolds and provide feedback. Perform frequent inspections and document results. Have a functional planned schedule and compare progress to projections. Problems should be identified as early as possible.

- Agreements about when and amounts of payments to be made, etc. Avoid sloppy record keeping. Require paid receipts to prove subcontractors and material vendors have been paid. Get a release of all liens form signed before last payment. If you don't, you could have paid off the general contractor and still be hit with liens from unpaid subs. Consult with your legal department about lien laws in your state and be sure you are covered.
- Resolve disputes promptly. Avoid endless delay in resolution of disputes or you'll end up in court.
- Evaluate each contractor on a regular basis for quality, service, cost, and fulfillment of contract terms. Write up a short narrative to put into the file how the job went.
- Be sure to keep a complete set of all contracts. Without them you'll have no proof of work promised in a court of law.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Randy Crocker, Principal Owner of Hassle Free Commercial Services, has over 27 years of experience in the commercial engineering field. HFCS are contractors specializing in industrial building maintenance, fire prevention, and repair on: HVAC, fire alarm systems, plumbing, emergency generators and electrical systems in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. Visit HFCS online at www.myhfcs.com. Online Marketing by [Tim Kenney Marketing](#).