



# Home Improvement Madison.com

## Avoid Home Improvement Scams: Beware Contractors Promising Too Much, Too Soon, Too Cheap

The lure of easy money brings shady characters into the Home Improvement arena every season. Madison and Dane County are not immune to the influx of unscrupulous people looking for a fast buck.

“If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!” Nowhere is that more true than with Home Improvements. Most local contractors are honest, hardworking and reliable. But, some aren’t. The challenge is determining which is which to avoid scams.

### **Educate and Protect Yourself**

The World Wide Web features resources to rank and rate service providers. Local builders’ associations often list the licensed contractors and subcontractors in the area.

### **Think Twice If:**

- Confirming the contractor’s name, company name, address, telephone number or credentials is difficult or impossible
- Salespeople are vague or reluctant to give you straight answers
- Salespeople don’t listen, they only want to discuss products and prices
- They try to pressure you into signing a contract right away – sign now, the deal is only good today!
- They will provide a “special rate” because your home will be used for “advertising”
- Salespeople don’t return calls, texts or emails
- The contractor cannot provide written references – if they do have references call them!
- You can’t find anything but out-of-date information on the products they promote
- They can’t provide proof of license or insurance information
- They can’t provide a website and are not known to the Better Business Bureau or a local trade association, etc.

### **Stop Right Now If:**

- They ask you to pay for the entire job in advance
- The salesperson asks to be paid in cash
- The contractor doesn’t explain your right to cancel the contract within three days — Wisconsin law provides this grace period so you can declare the contract null and void without penalty if you change your mind.

### **Low Prices Aren’t Always a ‘Deal’**

“You get what you pay for...most of the time.” An extremely low cost supplier may sound really good, but may not be able to deliver on promises or be around to stand behind its products. Can you afford to take that risk with a significant investment like a new roof for example? At the same time, a higher price doesn’t necessarily mean the quality of the work or the products is truly better.

Even after doing your homework always remember: Buyer Beware!