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## **Highlights: Roofers**

Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about the roofs over their heads—not until they see or hear a drip. That gets their attention, and with good reason. Roofing work can cost thousands of dollars. Worse still, choosing the wrong roofer can mean spending thousands of dollars more than necessary and getting shoddy results. The new issue of *Washington Consumers' CHECKBOOK* magazine, available at [www.checkbook.org](http://www.checkbook.org), compares 96 local roofing companies. Findings from the report include:

- Of the 96 companies evaluated, 49 were rated “adequate” or “superior” overall by 95 percent or more of their surveyed customers. On the flipside, seven of the companies were rated “inferior” overall by at least 20 percent of their surveyed customers.
- Prices from different companies for the same roof work often vary by thousands of dollars. For one of the specific jobs for which CHECKBOOK got quotes, prices ranged from \$5,400 to \$20,195—a difference of more than \$14,000.

### **CHECKBOOK recommends homeowners follow these tips when hiring/working with a roofer:**

- Get bids from several companies. Homeowners should use the estimators as consultants, getting their advice on what needs to be done. Then they should go back to each company with the final description of what they want done so each can bid on the same job.
- Before using any contractor, ask it for proof that it is licensed and that it has liability and workers' compensation insurance.
- Get a copy of the warranty from the manufacturer of whatever roofing materials are used. Also, get a warranty on the roofer's work, ideally for five years or more; have the roofer write into the contract: “in addition to all other warranties, if roof leaks within five years, [or even better, 10 years], except as a result of accidental damage, contractor will bear the cost of labor and materials to eliminate all leaks.”
- Get a fixed-price contract for exactly what is to be done. Specify what roof areas are included, whether old shingles are to be removed, whether flashings are to be replaced, who is responsible for cleaning up and hauling away debris, and exactly what types and weights of materials are to be used.
- Arrange to pay for the work as late in the process as possible. About half of the contractors CHECKBOOK surveyed will allow customers to withhold all payments until work is complete. Try to arrange to withhold at least a portion of the price until the new or repaired roof has been tested by some stormy weather.
- If you find a problem with a roofing job, negotiate directly with the contractor. If that doesn't work, complain to state and local government consumer agencies.

*The media may cite selected examples of top-rated roofing companies, as shown in the new issue of Washington Consumers' CHECKBOOK, and CHECKBOOK's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or [jlettis@checkbook.org](mailto:jlettis@checkbook.org) to schedule.*

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