



For Immediate Release

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Caution Urged When Selecting a Builder or Remodeler in the Aftermath of Wildfires

Austin, Texas (September 7, 2011) – As wildfires scorch Central Texas, many families will have to pick up the pieces and either rebuild or remodel their homes. The Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Austin urges the public to do its homework when selecting a builder or remodeler.

First, develop a list of builders and/or remodelers. Look in the real estate section of your local newspaper for builders and projects. Check with local real estate agents for references. Ask friends and relatives for recommendation. Many HBA members have successful homebuilding and remodeling businesses. Visit www.AustinHomeBuilders.com; click on “Find a Member,” then scroll down to search for a builder or remodeler.

Second, do your research. “When you hire a professional home builder or remodeler, you are buying a service rather than a product. The quality of the service they provide will determine the quality of the finished project and your satisfaction with it. Listed below are some qualifications you will want to explore and questions you will want to ask when you interview them,” said Harry L. Savio, CAE, Executive Vice President of the HBA.

Business Experience and Management

Does the builder/remodeler:

- Maintain a permanent mailing address, a phone number and a pager or answering system?
You want to be able to reach them quickly and easily – especially at critical times.
- Carry insurance that protects you from claims arising due to property damage or job site injuries?
 - Ask for a copy of their insurance certificates so you can be sure that you are not liable for property damage or jobsite-related injuries.

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- You should also ask them how much the project will add to your home's value and then obtain the necessary additional insurance.
- Have an established presence in the community?
 - How long has the company been in business? Longevity usually suggests financial stability.
 - Do they maintain solid relationships with experienced independent trade contractors (such as plumbers and electricians) and work with them as a team to keep your job running smoothly?
- Possess a trustworthy reputation among customers, peers, and in the home building/remodeling industry?
 - Ask for a list of building materials suppliers and call them to see if they have an account or pay for materials on delivery. Most suppliers are willing to extend credit to financially sound companies.
 - Do they have a track record of successful projects similar to yours?

Construction and Technical Expertise

Does the builder/remodeler

- Have a working knowledge of the many types and ages of homes in the area? A sound structural and architectural knowledge of what is likely to be behind a wall or under a floor helps the home remodeler provide reliable estimates. Extremely low bids may reflect a remodeler's lack of this knowledge and a poor understanding of the actual costs involved.
- Know what products and materials would likely be used for your project?
- Offer an array of options when selecting products, materials and techniques?
- Specialize in particular types of projects?
- Arrange for the building permit if needed? Remember that the person who obtains the permit is the contractor of record and therefore liable for the work.
- Offer a warranty? If so, what kind and for how long? What is covered under the warranty and what is not?
- Understand the scheduling issues required to begin and complete your job within your timetable?

Customer Service and Communication

Does the builder/remodeler:

- Respond promptly to your inquiries?

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- Emphasize customer service?
- Listen to and understand your needs and wants?
 - When you discuss what you'd like to do, does the home remodeler show enthusiasm for your ideas and suggest ways to make them work within your budget?
 - You should ask the home remodeler for examples of how the company has solved home improvement challenges for other customers.
- Facilitate and encourage communication? Ask how the home remodeler handles communication during construction (such as a message center in the house for you and the remodeling team).

With the answers to these questions, you'll be able to pick a professional builder or remodeler that's the best match for your home.

About the HBA

For more than 58 years, the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Austin has served as the leading not-for-profit trade organization dedicated to residential construction and remodeling in Central Texas. With approximately 850 members, the HBA works with government, public, business and community organizations in five counties to protect every family's right to home ownership. The HBA and its members work to ensure that those who protect us, teach our children, and provide essential services can afford to live here. The vast majority of new homes are purchased by middle-class families – the very people at risk of being priced out of our communities by rising taxes and government fees. For more information, visit www.AustinHomeBuilders.com.

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