

The 11-point checklist for hiring a concrete floor contractor

Okay, you're about to start a concrete floor project. Design, materials, contractor, permits—all taken care squared away. You even did your homework on which materials to use. The specifications are all there for your contractor.

What could possibly go wrong? Most everything—unless you follow these tips.

Here are a few things you need know before you say “Go.”

1. Know your contractor

The harsh reality is that concrete work is very competitive and there are plenty of contractors who will say anything to get your work.

- Before selecting a contractor, be sure that they have successfully completed projects that are like yours. Demand proof. If possible, visit projects that they have completed. Talk with their customers.
- Do they have the equipment they need to complete the job?
- Ask for their equipment list. Many types of concrete work require specialized machinery to complete a job correctly.
- Does the contractor comply with OSHA training requirements?
- How long has the contractor been in business under the same name? (All too often, contractors get themselves in trouble, only to open under a different name.)
- Is the contractor an expert on walkway safety?
- Do they understand the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standards as they relate to slip resistance of floors? Are they certified by the National Floor Safety Institute? Ask them what the current ANSI standards mean to your particular project.
- Ask your contractor about successes and failures. They've had both. If they won't talk about their failures, they won't own up to mistakes. Show them the door.

2. Expertise vs. Experience: Your contractor needs both

Expertise is important

Your contractor needs to know about concrete mixes, materials, chemical reactions, impact and abrasion resistance, chemical resistance, thermo-

dynamics of concrete, traffic patterns, intended use, and the details of specifications.

Much like prescription drugs, there may be dangers in combining certain materials or specifying the wrong materials. Your contractor must understand.

- Your contractor should have a good relationship with material manufacturers and a working history of use with the materials that are to be used on your project. Ideally, the people doing your work will have had training and be approved applicators of the products.
- Ask your contractor what they know about the materials you may have already specified. If you have not specified materials, get the contractor's recommendations and their reasons for their recommendations.
- Has their proposed technology been field-tested and proven?

Experience allows expertise to work

A chemist or engineer may have plenty of expertise, but probably wouldn't do you much good in the field.

Your contractor needs to have experience to properly handle preparation, staffing, logistics, scheduling and, most important, the unexpected. (There is no such thing as an “ordinary” job.)

An experienced contractor knows how to anticipate changes and problems, often before they happen. Experience will save your bacon if things get ugly. An experienced contractor won't panic, or worse, leave the job if things take an unexpected turn. (It's been known to happen.)

An experienced contractor brings a calm assurance that someone knows what to do, when and how to do it, and how to make the best of unexpected turns.

When you interview contractors, listen carefully and determine which contractor delivers peace-of-mind that comes only with the right mix of expertise and experience.

Never, ever hire a contractor that does not visit your job-site before submitting their proposal. If it is new construction, the contractor should be asking a lot of questions about the project, intended use, scheduling, budgets, and what may seem to be unimportant details.

11-Point Contractor Checklist:

Complete this checklist for every contractor you consider

- 1. Does the contractor provide a project list and have they shown you successfully completed projects that are similar to yours?

- 2. How long has the contractor been in business under the same name?

- 3. Does the contractor provide an equipment list specific to your project?

- 5. Does the contractor provide proof of OSHA training and compliance?

- 6. Have personnel received specific training from material manufacturers? Are they “Approved Applicators?”

- 7. Does the contractor understand the ANSI standards for floor safety and slip resistance?

- 8. Is the contractor certified by the NFSI (National Floor Safety Institute)?

- 9. Will the contractor discuss successes AND failures?

- 10. Does the contractor provide a written proposal with anticipated scheduling?

- 11. Does the contractor deliver peace-of-mind?

Your notes:

