

# REMODELING NEWS

## Alerts - both good and bad!

The state is cracking down on home repair fraud. Effective this July, home improvement contractors must register with the state. Recently signed by Governor Rendell was the "Home Improvement Consumer Protection Law", the new law is intended "to protect consumers from unscrupulous contractors, provide new protection for consumers who hire home improvement contractors and authorize criminal penalties for home improvement fraud." Legitimate contractors are elated about this long overdue law, which will expose and eliminate those who give this industry a bad reputation. Home improvement contractors will be required to:

- register with the Pa. Bureau of Consumer protection & pay a fee
- disclose any previous crimes, fraud, bankruptcy arising from a home improvement transaction in the past 10 yrs.
- maintain liability insurance of \$50,000 or more
- disclose status of licenses from other states
- include his state registration number in all ads, estimates, proposals and contracts
- provide a toll free number to the Bureau and web site to check on his registration
- contracts must be in writing, legible and contain the registration number; approximate starting date & completion date for the work; description of work, materials to be used and specifications that cannot be changed without a written change order signed by the homeowner; total sales price; 3 business day right of rescission; and it prohibits deposits in excess of 1/3 of the contract price for contracts over \$1000, plus any special order materials. Contractor not registered? Don't hire them. This law is to protect you. It targets fly-by-night contractors who are the source of most complaints and legitimizes those who are reliable and honest. The elderly are targeted more frequently and they especially must be made aware of this new law.

And a caution alert: There are now websites that offer to find someone to remodel your home. The problems with this are many. They put very little emphasis on the quality of work or ethics of the contractors they're providing and are more interested in getting "thousands of names" for you to select from. They do ask if they have the correct credentials (not required yet in Pa.) and ask if they carry insurance. Even websites that are endorsed by well known television techs have numerous complaints registered with the Better Business Bureau (93 in 3 yrs. time). These sites charge the contractor for each lead given them, whether they get the job or not. You can believe they will recover their costs for this. Many websites running under different names are owned by the same company and are difficult to contact. There are numerous online blogs about work never being completed, lack of contractor screening and inferior work.

Best way to get someone for home improvements or any type of work? Ask friends, neighbors, your building inspector, local lumber yard, post something at work, check local advertising. These people live in your neighborhoods and care about their reputations - and then check them out!!!

Sue Clark  
Clark Construction Company

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3180 Industrial Boulevard  
Bethel Park, PA. 15102  
Phone: (412) 833-7222  
Fax: (412) 833-2959  
URL: <http://www.clarkremodeling.com>