1. Get several bids.
   - Try to get written bids or estimates from at least three different contractors. Check out the contractor.

2. Get the contractor's full name, address and phone number.
   - Ask for references and call them.
   - Check with the Better Business Bureau and courthouse for criminal history and civil cases against the contractor.
   - For repairs that cost more than $10,000, ask the contractor for a copy of their Certificate of Registration with the Texas Residential Construction Commission.
   - Be careful when dealing with contractors who have out-of-state license plates. Get it in writing.

3. Get a written contract.
   - Specify the work to be done.
   - Specify the price.
   - Don't sign anything you don't understand.

4. Control the money.
   - Do not pay for the entire job up front.
   - Try to pay as little as possible up front.
   - It is against the law for contractors in disaster areas to take any money unless they have a local office in your county or one county over for at least one year.
   - Insist on waiting to pay the full amount until after the work is finished.
   - You are protected by special rules if the contractor does not have a local office in your county or the next county over.
   - Do not make the final payment until you have inspected the work. Make sure you are completely satisfied with the repairs.
   - Do not pay in cash.

Report bad contractors to: Better Business Bureau; the Texas Attorney General; the local district attorney; and Lone Star Legal Aid.

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