

## CONTRACTOR SELECTION

Selecting a contractor is essential to the success of your exterior flatwork projects. Before hiring a contractor, make sure he has the following qualifications:

- Has the knowledge and necessary technical skill to complete your job.
- Has experience on similar concrete projects.
- Possesses the proper equipment and an experienced crew to complete the project.

It's important to always ask for references. If you have any doubts, remember that the Better Business Bureau keeps records on all complaints made against contractors. Choose a contractor as you would select a family doctor or mechanic. He should show a sincere and enthusiastic interest in your project.

### Important Questions

A prospective contractor should listen carefully to your plans during the interview and not rush you into decisions. Some of the questions you should ask include:

- **How long have you worked as a contractor?** A minimum of five years experience is preferable. Most contractors who go out of business do so within the first five years.
- **Is your contractor's license in good standing?** Check with the state licensing board or the Better Business Bureau if you have any questions about a contractor's certification. Avoid working with any contractor whose license is defective, or has numerous complaints on his record. It's also a good idea to get the license numbers of any subcontractors on your project.
- **May I have the names and phone numbers of your last five clients?** A reputable contractor will be happy to provide this information. If possible, visit one or two of the references to inspect the quality of the work and verify that these were legitimate jobs.
- **What kind of insurance do you carry?** Your contractor should have property/casualty and workers compensation insurance, both of which are required by law. Ask for copies of the policies for your files and check that the insurance policy is in force.
- **Who will actually do the work?** If your contractor will be using subcontractors, have him tell you about their qualifications, and make sure that he will be managing them at the work site.
- **Can you give me an estimate of how much the project will cost?** Do your own research first. Contact suppliers for prices on materials, and also factor in the cost of labor. This should give you a pretty good idea of whether the contractor's bid seems reasonable.
- **Will you fill out a credit application?** Get a credit application from your bank and copy it for prospective contractors to fill out. It's important to know where your contractor banks and whether he is a reliable customer.
- **What are your regular work hours?** It's also important to know how the contractor will deal with delays in the work schedule.
- **Will you provide your own contract?** Most reputable contractors have their own contracts, but use one of your own if he does not. Document the services the contractor will provide, spelling out the scope of the work and the responsibilities of both the contractor and owner.