



How to Hire a Contractor

Selecting a Contractor

Property owners are required to hire a licensed and bonded general contractor or plumber to connect their homes to Citizens Energy Group's sanitary sewer main. Since your Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP) project affects your entire neighborhood, you and your neighbors are likely to be approached by many contractors soliciting work. Selecting a contractor is an issue that should not be handled lightly, as you are responsible for paying for their services.

Consider the following when selecting a general contractor or plumber:

1. Ask the contractor for a business card. The card should include the company's name, address and phone number.
2. Research the contractor.
 - Make sure the general contractor or plumber is licensed with the City of Indianapolis. Call (317) 327-8700 or visit www.citizensenergygroup.com/Contractor for a link to the Indianapolis Department of Code Enforcement (DCE) website to determine if the contractor is licensed.
 - Make sure the contractor is bonded.
 - Ask the contractor for the name and phone number of his or her insurance company.
 - Verify with the insurance company that the contractor is insured against claims covering workers' compensation, property damage and personal liability claims.
 - Contact the local Better Business Bureau at (317) 488-2222 (Website: www.indybbb.org; email: info@indybbb.org) to find out if there have been complaints about the contractor.
 - Contact the Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Services Division, at (317) 232- 6330 (Website: www.in.gov/attorneygeneral) and ask how long the company has been in business and if any complaints have been filed against it.
 - Contact Angie's List at 1-888-944-5478 or visit

www.angieslist.com. Angie's List is a membership organization that requires a yearly fee to use the service.

3. Talk with your neighbors, friends and co-workers who might have experience with local contractors. Ask them if they have recommendations.
4. Ask the contractor for a list of local references, including names and phone numbers. Call the references to find out if they were satisfied with the contractor's work. Visit and inspect the projects.
5. Ask for estimates in writing from at least two or three contractors. Estimates should be provided free of charge. Compare costs before making a financial commitment. Make sure the estimates are based upon the same specifications, materials, labor and time. Also, if you coordinate with several of your neighbors, the contractor may reduce the price.
6. Discuss the estimates in detail with each contractor, making certain you understand the reasons for any variations in the prices. The lowest estimate is not always the best estimate.

Signing a Contract

Before signing a contract, make sure all the necessary components are listed, including but not limited to the following:

1. Any contracts you sign should have the name of the company, the name of the contractor's representative, the company's address and its telephone number. Never sign a partial or blank contract. Read every contract clause carefully, and ask any questions you may have before signing. Retain a copy of the signed contract and file it in your records.
2. You are not required to make a down payment for lateral connections; it is your choice. Be suspicious if you are asked to pay for the entire job in advance. The down payment, as a rule of thumb, is usually no

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more than one-third of the total contract price.

3. Be sure the contractor includes a list of all work to be completed. The contract you sign must include, at a minimum, the following:
 - Abandoning the septic tank
 - Pumping and emptying the septic tank
 - Disposing of the sludge at a Citizens Energy Group treatment plant (Note: Disposal of sludge in the new sewer is against the law.)
 - Filling all tanks with clean fill material to grade level
 - Any internal plumbing changes necessary to connect to the sanitary sewer
 - A complete plumbing connection to ensure your lateral is connected directly to the sanitary sewer main
 - Connecting all wastewater lines, including the washing machine line, to the lateral that runs to the sanitary sewer
 - Agreed-upon start and completion dates
 - Any warranties and guarantees of workmanship
 - All verbal promises made during your hiring process
4. Other information that may be included in the contract:
 - Final grading and filling in voids in your yard after settlement
 - Driveway restoration and any landscape restoration
 - Total cost, with a breakdown for labor and material charges
 - A payment schedule
 - Property-specific requirements unique to the location
5. If the contractor's work does not pass inspection, you should not be held financially responsible for any corrections that must be made.
6. Make sure you inform your contractor of all known stormwater and perimeter lines. It is illegal to connect lines that discharge stormwater, groundwater, roof runoff, subsurface drainage or surface water into the sanitary sewer (such as sump pumps, downspouts, etc.).
7. Do not sign a completion certificate for the job until it has been inspected and approved by DCE inspectors and all work specified in your contract is properly completed.