



## Inspect as Your Renovation Goes...

Most renovation experiences are happy ones –despite the stress. But don't assume things are going according to plan just because you seem to have a sound contract and good rapport with your renovator. Stay on top of your project to prevent minor errors from becoming major problems in the first place.

If you have a disagreement, try to be reasonable. Go over the contract and listen carefully to the renovator's explanations. If you're still not satisfied, get a second opinion from a professional Home Inspector or an architect before taking further action.

## How to Handle Problems with Your Renovator

What if you're not happy with the job? First, try to negotiate a solution. If that fails, send them a registered letter setting out your objections and mail copies to your provincial consumer protection branch and /or the City and if your renovator is a member, to your local home builders' association.

In this letter, you can either:

- A.** threaten to cancel the contract and obtain a refund of your deposit (*permitted in some provinces*); or
- B.** give the renovator a set time in which to finish the work to your satisfaction and advise that if, after that time work is incomplete, you will hire another contractor to complete the work using money remaining from the original contract. Only do this after you have obtained advice from your lawyer and a new estimate from another contractor.

Poor workmanship and unsatisfactory business practices can be reported to the municipal bureau that issued the contractor's license. Work that is not up to building standards can be reported to your local building inspection office – assuming proper Permits have been taken out.

There are laws to protect you from dishonest or incompetent contractors. Provincial governments and the federal government have consumer protection branches: you can ask for their help. Your local Better Business Bureau will also hear your complaints and help mediate a dispute. Finally, you may be able to file a claim in small claims court.

## Keep It Safe

From initial demolition to final cleanup, renovation projects can present a number of hazards, too. Some are obvious: the nail-studded board tossed into a pathway, the naked blade of a power tool. Others are less visible: the unshored excavation, the fumes from solvents, paints and glues.

There are good reasons to think about safety even if someone else is doing the actual work. You don't want your renovation marred by an accident or a lawsuit.

Know what your insurance will cover before work starts, especially if you are supplying some of the materials or lending tools or other items. And – also make sure your contractor's coverage is adequate to shield you against all possible claims. Contractors normally carry liability insurance, but their policies may not cover all the trade people involved, or others who stray onto the site. In the case of serious injury, you could be liable. WorkSafe BC coverage is a MUST !

Once work has started, knowledge and awareness can prevent many accidents:

- Warn people coming near the site about hazardous areas, activities and substances before they encounter them.
- Insist that the work site be kept tidy and as hazard-free as possible (Contract requirement).
- Insist that all hazardous substances be kept in sealed, clearly marked, non-food containers.
- Dispose of hazardous waste promptly, in accordance with local regulations: don't put it out with the regular garbage.
- If you're doing the work yourself, read and follow the instructions on all hazardous products, as well as the Material Safety Data Sheets provided by manufacturers and retailers.
- Insist on the use of appropriate, well-maintained tools and equipment.
- See to it that appropriate safety equipment and clothing approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) are used.
- Insist that a fire extinguisher approved by Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) for Type A, B and C fires be on site at all times.
- Stay alert and ensure that everyone on the job stays alert. Report horseplay or erratic behavior to the project manager /Consultant /local authority & business owner at once.
- Insist that all hazardous materials and sites are safely locked up at the end of each work day.

If you live in your house while the work is being done, check at the end of each day to be sure that safety precautions have been followed.

Consider your own Consultant to help oversee things as they progress – for peace-of-mind and to maintain control of the process. A professional Home Inspector could look out for your best interests...

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