



## **BBB Advises Homeowners to Watch Out for “Storm Chasers”**

Your home may take a serious beating when a big storm hits. During the cleanup effort, choose repair contractors carefully, to avoid having your wallet take a beating too. The Better Business Bureau is warning consumers whose homes are damaged during severe weather events to look out for fly-by-night “storm chasers.”

Storm chasers often include problem contractors who have temporarily crossed into the state, seeking to take advantage of homeowners who suffered property damage during the storm. Their dubious deals can cost thousands and create serious headaches.

How do you find a contractor you can trust? BBB recommends that homeowners do the following:

**Beware of contractors who stop by your home after a storm** and offer services at a supposedly low cost since they are in your neighborhood. They could be unlicensed or unscrupulous operators who will take your money but provide incompetent services or no services at all.

**Start Your Search with BBB.** In addition to offering Business Reviews on tens of thousands of contractors—good and bad—across the US, you can also rely on BBB’s **Accredited Business Locator** to find trustworthy contractors in your area. BBB accreditation standards require that accredited businesses make a good faith effort to resolve disputes.

**Check the contractor’s background before you hire.** Verify that the business meets all state and local requirements including being licensed, insured and bonded. Also ask the business for references from recent jobs, and check them. Confirm whether or not the contractor will be subcontracting the job or relying on their own employees.

**Recognize the red flags.** Beware of any contractor who uses high pressure sales tactics or requires full payment upfront. Also avoid contractors who require YOU to get the necessary permits.

**Seek at least three bids.** Beware of low-ball estimates that may potentially balloon over time or foreshadow shoddy work to come.

**Get everything is in writing.** Make sure that the full scope of the work is explained in the contract including cleanup and disposal of waste. All verbal agreements need to be included in the written agreement. Pay close attention to the payment terms, estimated price of materials and labor, any provisions regarding liens, and any warranties or guarantees. Don’t sign any contract that has blanks in it or that you don’t understand.

Start With Trust. For reliable information, lists of BBB Accredited Businesses by industry and BBB Business Reviews you can trust on local businesses, visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) or call (212) 533-6200.