

Unqualified and unlicensed people doing service trade work and the damage that can be done.

During recent discussions with other managers and owners of construction service trades many have expressed concern with unlicensed and unqualified people working for home owners. This is a very large problem in this industry. Too many handy persons thinking they can do plumbing, heating and air conditioning, and electrical work. There are many problems with these type people doing the work most noticeable is the lack of knowledge to protect the health of the home owner.

The second issue would be with insurance coverage. Simply explained their insurance will not cover their illegal and unlicensed work. If there is property damage or heaven forbid another person injured due to negligence no one will be held responsible. The home owners insurance may not cover any damage caused by the improper installation. A simple install of a kitchen faucet is messed up due to the handy person's improper education to understand what type of water supply lines that can withstand the pressure and expansion of hot water. Sure a lay person can tighten up a nut or two however there is more to it than what appears.

Our company recently installed a shower pan liner and strainer. The code requires pitch material to be used under the pan liner allowing water to have proper flow to the drain. The contractor claimed that he has been installing shower pans for years and has never used this pitch material. Here is a person that is unqualified doing home repairs without the proper understanding of code requirement and installation guidelines. What happens when the materials used in other jobs fails and damages the property? What will be found is an improper installation that was completed more cheaply than a plumber. This has disaster spelled all over it for the home owner and the contractor.

Another area of grave concern in the plumbing industry is with hot water heaters. Lay people installing water heaters without the proper knowledge once again and installed improperly due to not understanding code requirements or factory requirement. All water heaters are required to have a safety device called a relief valve. This valve is for the home owner's safety and prevents the water heater tank from acting like a bomb. Depending on your code requirements the relief valve is to be piped to the floor or out of the building. I visited a young lady with children. The water heater relief valve exited the building through the wall at 4 foot. Where the valve exited is a lanai and sitting directly under the relief valve drain line were two lounge chairs. When the safety device opens up due to an extremely high amount of pressure caused by malfunctioning thermostats, over 200 degree hot water will pour out of the piping that is 4 foot off the floor. This will burn whoever is in the lounge chairs immediately. Is this really worth the risk of having unqualified and unlicensed people perform plumbing work in your home when they do not care about you or your family's safety?

All of today's toilets are low consumption toilets. This means they use less water. Many of these toilets take special parts that deliver a higher volume of water to the tank. Using a standard type fill valve for the toilet will not produce enough water to flush the toilet properly. The toilet has an incomplete flush that will not carry paper and waste to the proper destination which can cause more problems and clog up your building drain or building sewer due to the inefficient carry. The handy person may over tighten bolts and may break what is called a closet flange that holds the toilet to the floor securing it to the floor. Typically these handy people will use a piece of metal or whatever is in their van or car to attach to the broken flange. Why do they do this? They do not know how to lead a closet flange in or replace a plastic flange properly.

BUT THE HANDY PERSON IS CHEAPER! The reason they are cheaper is due to not knowing the industry, products and how to safely install the products. They do not carry the proper license that verifies he or she has the proper knowledge to do the installation or repair. They do not have the proper insurance to cover any damage or liability claims. Ask the handy person how much coverage he or she has and you decide if 25 thousand dollars is enough to cover your home if the handy person lights a plumbing torch and does not have the proper amount of air inside a wall and catches the dust on fire while repairing a leaky copper pipe in the wall.

I was called to a home owner's home where a handy man was working on a remodel. This home is worth multimillion dollars. The handyman could not solder up the pipes due to water dripping in the line. What does he do? He fills the water pipe with toilet paper. When I became involved there was 6 inches of pipe filled with toilet paper. If I would have allowed this person to continue doing illegal work this lady would have been drinking water with toilet paper in the water. Toilet paper is designed to break down in water and when any other fixture in the home is used water from that pipe will transfer that toilet paper to that faucet. In this particular bathroom called a jack- n- jill bathroom there were 6 water lines filled with toilet paper waiting to be circulated throughout the home. I am not sure about you however I would be very alarmed to fill a glass of water and discover toilet paper in it and it does not matter if it is clean or not.

Is it worth having an inexperienced person who talks a good game and can convince you that he or she can do the work? One question should be asked and that is; do you have a license to legally install or repair these products? Second question; please produce your liability insurance form for me. Third question: what happens if there is property damage caused by a failure of product or installation?

Keep in mind these unprofessional people cannot purchase the same quality materials that your local trades people can from a supply home. The merchandise in home centers is not the same quality with the majority of materials. The home center products will have more plastic, more plated metal that will deteriorate and rot away much faster and will not provide you the long term use that a professional tradesperson supplies to you. The china fixtures such as toilets and sinks are thinner china and will not last as long. In the long run it will be cheaper to you to purchase from the professional. You deserve the best quality that you can in your castle and with that you deserve the safest installation possible by a quality licensed contractor that will make sure it is installed properly.

Protect yourself at all costs it is your health that is at risk. Is your family's health and safety worth the risk to allow an unqualified, unlicensed, and unemployed person to do work due to undercutting a professional expert at their trade that has knowledge and understanding of the products and requirements to install them properly? Would you allow a podiatrist to do open heart surgery on you? Would you allow an optician to examine your ear? Do you buy groceries from a restaurant? You can always replace the dollars spent however you cannot replace time or any damage done.