

Everything You MUST Know Before Hiring a Fencing Company

Introduction

Are you thinking about installing a new fence on your property? If so you have many kinds of fences to choose from and many types of construction materials to consider. A good fence can have many purposes. It can protect your property's plants, animals, swimming pools and everything else from the outside world. It can help keep children, pets and personal property safe on the inside. Some fences are great at providing privacy while others simply look nice and add a fashionable appearance to the area. There are many different types of fences to choose from and each type is made from specific materials.

Depending on the size of the area that needs to be surrounded by a fence, the type of fencing you have decided on and how deep the fence's posts need to be planted, you may want to consider hiring a fencing company to install it for you. A good fencing company can help you choose the right type of fence for your needs. They can also explain how much maintenance each type will require and how long each kind of fence will typically last. They can offer advice on painting and staining. Most importantly, a good fencing company can come by the property, remove the old fence (if there is one) and professionally install your brand new fence. Having a fence professionally installed will make it last longer, ensure that the posts are properly implanted into the ground and make sure the fence looks even and nice.

A reputable fence installer can get the job done quickly and will have all of the necessary equipment to do so. They will also understand the various rules and regulations for installing a fence in your area and will get all the necessary permits to do so. Not all fencing companies are created equal however. Some companies are more interested in taking your money than they are in getting the job done right the first time. Because of this, it is a good idea that you research and carefully choose your fence company. Here is everything you need to know **before** you choose a specific fence company.

Finding a Fence Company

Once you have decided that you want a fencing company to construct or install your new fence, you are ready to begin the process of finding one. Just as you wouldn't choose the first car you saw on a lot, you shouldn't choose the first fencing company you come across. The best thing to do in order to find a reputable fencing company is to find 3 to 5 potential companies first. It is a good idea to make a list of potentials and then determine which one is the best choice for your specific situation through research. Here are some steps you can take to find potential fence companies for your list.

Perform an online search

Major search engines like Bing, Yahoo and Google make it really easy to locate companies that operate in your area. Try typing in something like: "fence installer" plus your zip code and odds are you will be presented with many choices.

Ask around

You can also ask other people if they know of any fencing companies in the area. You can ask friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors or anyone else. You can also ask your local hardware store, building supply store or fence distributor if they can recommend a specific fencing company to you.

Check with online associations and recommendation sites

There are many of these websites available to help you find local fence companies. Many of these sites also offer ideas, advice and helpful hints. A good example of one of these sites is the American Fence Association, which can be found at www.americanfenceassociation.com. More examples include the US Fence Guide site at www.usfenceguide.com and the fencing contractor database at www.constructiondeal.com.

Look at traditional advertising

You can find advertisements for fencing companies through traditional advertising venues like the Yellow Pages, billboards, signs, flyers or even through radio and TV ads.

Avoiding Low Quality Fence Companies

It is very important that you do your research and find a fence installation company that is reliable, reputable and high quality. There are many potential problems that could develop if you hire a bad fencing company, including shoddy work, low quality construction materials and damage to your property. During your search for potential fencing companies you will want to keep an eye out for warning signs of low quality companies. Here are some warning signs that you will want to be aware of.

Door to door fence company solicitors

If a fencing company is soliciting people door to door, then odds are they are not reputable or of a high quality. Very often these door to door salesmen are from another region, are new to the business or are running a low cost operation. If they have to advertise by going door to door then odds are they are not really a high quality fencing company with a list of satisfied customers.

Fence companies that ask you to find the required permits

A reputable fence company should acquire all of the necessary permits for you. If the contractor is asking you to find all of the necessary permits then they may be trying to avoid the permit offices. This could mean that they lack the necessary licenses and insurances to operate legally in your area.

Any fence company that offers you discounted materials that were 'left over' from their last project

This is a very common ploy for less than reputable fencing companies. A reputable contractor won't offer you 'left over' materials from another job. Companies or contractors that do these things are typically from out of state or operate their small businesses from their vehicles.

Fence companies that you cannot find any information about

If you cannot find any information about a specific fencing company by searching online or looking the local directory, then odds are they are not a well established and legal company. This could also mean that the company doesn't have a real office, phone number or website. If you can't find any information regarding a specific company, then you probably want to look elsewhere.

Any fence company that wants you to pay them upfront

You should **always** sign a contract with a fence contractor before any work begins. Be extremely wary of any fencing company that wants the entire payment upfront. Also be wary of companies that demand that you pay them with cash. **Never** give a complete payment to a business before they have started working, and in most cases you want to pay a deposit of up to 1/3rd at the beginning of the work. You won't want to release the complete payment to the company until the job has been completed to your satisfaction. Also, resist the urge to pay a fence company in cash. Credit cards or checks are better forms of payment because they provide proof of payment.

A fence company that wants you to make a decision right away

If a fence company is pressuring you to choose them right away, then they are probably a low quality company. A reputable company will give you a chance to check up on them and make your decision. If the company wants a decision right away, it is probably because they do not want you to check on their reputation, licenses, insurances and more. **Never** allow a fence company, or any other company, to pressure you into making a decision before you are ready.

A fence contractor that suggests you borrow money to pay for the project from a specific bank or lender

If your fencing project is very large or covers a large area, then you may need financing to help pay for it. Don't agree to obtain this financing through a specific contractor or from a lender that he or she suggests. Spend just as much time and effort researching your different financing options as you will the specific fencing company you will be using.

Any fence company that makes you feel uncomfortable or uneasy

Never allow a fence company contractor or employees pressure you into anything or make you feel uncomfortable for any reason. If a company or employee does make you feel uncomfortable or upset in any way, you should starting looking for another company. Any company that you hire should treat you with respect and courtesy at all times.

Checking Up on a Fence Company

In order to check up on a potential fencing company **before** you hire them you should meet with a representative of each company on your list and ask them a few questions. Here are some things to look for and some questions you will want to ask in order to determine if a company is a reputable and reliable one.

Look for a commercial business residence

Some fence contractors work out of a commercial business residence while others work out of their homes or garages. Both types of fence installers can do a good job of installing your fence, but an installer with a commercial business residence is more likely to be reputable and able to service your fence down the road. Fence installers with commercial business residences will mean that you will have an office to visit and a phone number to call if something goes wrong. It will usually also mean that the installer and company have been around for a while and are doing well in their business.

Ask about sub-contracting

This is an important question to ask a company **before** you hire them. Some professional fence installers will sell you the product themselves and then sub-contract

out the actual installation to someone else. It is important that you know who exactly will be handling your installation. When a fence company uses its employees to handle its installation process, odds are you are going to get a better job. A business has control over their employees, including their schedules, their training and the type of job that they do. They will not have this kind of control over sub-contractors. Be sure to ask about sub-contracting.

Ask how long the company has been operating in this area

It is a good idea to find out how long a fence company has been operating in your area in order to determine their reputation and customer service level. Just because a business is new to the area doesn't necessarily mean that they won't offer you good customer service, but you won't be able to tell until after you have hired them. A fence company that has been in business for some time probably has a good record of customer service, or else they wouldn't still be operating. In general, the longer a company has been operating in a certain region, the better their customer service will likely be.

Ask about a written guarantee

A written guarantee is always a good idea and a reputable business should offer you one. The norm in this industry is typically a one year labor warranty. You may have to check with the product's manufacturer to find out information regarding the fence's warranty information. You should have some form of guarantee from your fence company regarding the quality of their installation job.

Ask if the company is bonded, insured, licensed and if it carries worker's compensation insurance

Every business should be licensed by the state where they operate in order to be considered legal. Always ask to see a business's license and ensure that it is current. This license works as a work permit for the construction and installation of your fence. It also means that company has no outstanding violations registered with your city.

A fence company should also be fully bonded and insured. This is to protect you from theft by the company's employees and from any damage to your personal property that may occur as a result of the company's actions. It also protects you from any injuries to

the company's workers that may occur on your property. Always choose a fence company that is fully licensed, bonded and insured. It is a good idea to look for worker's compensation insurance as well. If a company carries this insurance it means it protects its workers while they are on the job.

Ask if the company is familiar with the various regulations and codes required by your city or county for fence installation

This may not be a requirement in order for you to hire a fence company, but it certainly doesn't hurt to ask. Different counties, cities and states have different codes and regulations regarding the installation of fences. If you hire a contractor who already understands this information, it will save you the time of having to check on it yourself and will help make sure the job is done legally.

Ask for references

A reputable and successful fence installation company will have a list of satisfied customers they can refer you to. They should be able to show you some testimonials regarding their past work and put you in touch with former customers. Be wary of any contractors or installers who refuse to or are unable to provide you with references.

Ask about the contractor's equipment, materials and methods for different fence installation projects.

A reputable fence company will have all of the necessary equipment, materials, workers and methods to perform different types of installations. Ask them if they are able to use concrete to set fence posts. Ask them if they will remove the old fence. Take a look at some of their equipment and vehicles if you can. Look for equipment and vehicles that are in good condition and workable. High quality fence companies take the time to take proper care of their equipment and vehicles.

Ask if the company will visit the work site and take measurements before they quote you a price

Many fence companies and installers will come to the work site and take measurements before they offer you an estimate for the job. This is ideal because it gives you a chance to discuss options, review potential problems and get the most accurate price estimate. This is especially important if your fence installation project is in a difficult location, is very large or has other considerations attached to it.

Ask if the company will be the one to pull the work permit?

The answer to this question should be yes. You want a company that will compile the necessary work permits and follow all necessary rules and regulations.

Will the fence company acquire all of the construction materials that will be needed to complete your fencing project?

The answer to this question should also be yes, unless you want to purchase the required construction materials in order to save money and time. It is also a good idea to ask about what types of construction materials they intend to use. For example: the types of nails or screws that will be used, whether or not the fence will be painted or stained on-site or off-site and if the company uses concrete to set the fence's posts.

How does the company handle special requirements that have to do with the work space?

There can be a number of special requirements that you have to understand depending on the location of your fencing project. For example, if the area has sprinkler heads located in the lawn it is the homeowner's responsibility to point them out to the contractor and the contractor's responsibility not to damage them. There are also special requirements for work zones that contain a swimming pool, such as special permits and inspection requirements. If you have any of these things it is necessary that you know how the company will handle them **before** you choose to hire them.

Doing your own research

Now that you have met with potential fence installation companies and have asked your questions, it is time to do a little extra research on your own. Here are some research steps you can take to find out more information about a specific company **before** you choose one.

Check your references

At this point you should have some referrals given to you by the potential fence company and probably a few from other sources like those from your local building supply company, fence manufacturer, real estate agent or friends. The next step is to give these references a call and ask them a few questions. Here are some questions to ask a fence company's references:

Were you satisfied with the fence company's work and customer service? Did they do a good job in your opinion? Was the job completed on time and close to the estimated budget? How long ago did this company install or complete your fencing project?

Were you satisfied with the price you paid for the fence installation? Did the company come out and look at the project before they provided you with an estimate?

Were the employees and contractors polite, courteous and punctual? Did you have any problems with property damage, late arrivals or anything else? Did the company's workers clean up after themselves and remove all left-over construction materials? If the answer to these questions is "no"- then you may want to start looking for another company.

Did the work performed by the fence company include a warranty? Did you have to use this warranty at all? Did they provide the warranty to you in writing?

Check up on the company's reputation

It is a good idea to check up on a potential fence company's reputation **before** you decide whether or not to hire them. This can help prevent any nasty surprises from appearing down the road. You can check with your local Better Business Bureau to see if there have been any complaints lodged against the company. A complaint or two is generally okay, because not everyone will always be satisfied with their contractor, but any ethics violations should automatically send you out looking for a different company. You can also check out an online consumer review website to find out what other

customers are saying about a specific company. A good example of one of these consumer review websites is Angie's List.com.

Take a look at some of the company's past work in person

If possible it can be very helpful to take a look at a few of the company's past projects to see what they look like. Look for quality construction and materials when you review the work. Look at how well the fence was formed together and what the posts look like. Determine how well the entire project appears to have gone- is there trash, extra construction materials or anything lying around? Does the ground and yard near the fence appear to be damaged? A reputable fence company will leave the work area as close to its original state as is possible. (Keep in mind that sometimes things like mud do happen) The fence project should generally look good, even and pleasant in appearance.

Getting Estimates

Once you have decided that a specific company is high quality, reputable and has all of the required permits, licenses and insurance information, you can begin to ask for estimates. A high quality fencing company will provide you with a written estimate **before** you choose whether or not you want to hire them. A really decent company will visit the work site first and then provide a written estimate. This can be especially important if your fencing project is very large or has a number of specific requirements. Make sure that you discuss the scope of your individual project with the company's representative so that they can produce the most accurate estimate possible. This will help prevent nasty surprises and hidden costs from appearing later on.

Your list of potential fencing companies should include at least 3-5 choices. The more choices you have and the more estimates you can get the better chance you will find that perfect price. Once you have a few estimates from a few different companies you can compare them side by side to see which is the best deal. Make sure that each estimate covers everything you need for your fencing project to be completed right. The

rule of thumb is to generally throw out the lowest and the highest estimates and go for the ones in the middle. The thought behind this is that the lowest estimate is probably under-estimated in order to get your business, which means you have a higher chance of getting some hidden fees and additional costs down the road. The highest bidder probably made their estimate so high because they don't really need your business. Odds are they are swamped with other customers and may be too busy to get your project done correctly. The middle choices are probably the better ones, however this formula may not work in every situations. Choose an estimate that you can live with.

Choosing the Right Fence Company

Now that you have taken the time to locate local fencing companies, do your research, ask questions and check-up on their reputations, you probably have a good idea of which company is going to do the best job. Here are some final suggestions for making your choice.

Choose a fence company that you can find a good deal of information on

When reviewing your choices, makes sure to pick a specific company that has a local office, has a mailing address, a website, a phone number and one that has been in business for some time.

Choose a company that has everything it needs to do the job lined up

This means that you will want to choose a company that has the necessary employees and equipment to do the job, that knows the rules and regulations regarding your specific project and that will get all the necessary permits for you. This also means choosing a company that has the proper insurance coverage and one that is licensed and bonded.

Choose a company that has a good reputation

A few complaints against a company may not ruin your chances of choosing them, but in general it is a good idea to choose one that has a good reputation. Referrals are a great way to determine this reputation.

Choose a company that clearly explains the process and the costs to you

Depending on the scope of your fencing project, you may be working with this company for some time. During the installation process it will be very helpful to have a company that communicates well with you. That way you will have a clear understanding of what it is going to take to get the project done, how much it is going to cost and if there are any potential problems to be aware of.

Choose a company that offers you a decent estimate

The estimate offered to you by the fence company may or may not be the lowest in price, but it should be something you can live with. This estimate should be given to you after a representative of the company has visited the work area and taken the necessary measurements. This estimate should also be in written form.

Choose a company that you feel comfortable with

It is important that you feel comfortable with the company that you choose. The fence company's employees and contractors will be on your property, so it is important that you feel that you can trust them. You also want accountability from the fence company- if something does go wrong you want to know that there is someone specific whose job it is to fix your problem. You also want to make sure that you are receiving the appropriate amount of customer service and that you are not being pressured in any way to choose a specific plan or company. Trust is very important.

Choose a company with a written guarantee

You will want a written guarantee regarding both the fence's construction and the warranty on the product itself. This is important to avoiding any problems in the future.

Once you have considered all of these factors and made your choice, the very next step is to sign a written contract. **Never** allow any work to start on your property without a signed contract. Both you and the fence company will sign the contract and you will want to keep a copy of it for your records.

Make sure your contract includes:

The total estimated price for the project

The project's start date

The estimated completion date

The cost of the necessary construction materials and who will be procuring these materials

A guarantee of services provided

Before and After Your Fence Company Arrives

In order to make your fencing construction or installation project go as quickly and as smoothly as possible there are some things that you can do to help. These things make it easier for the company to do their job and easier for you make sure your property, your family and your money are safe. These things also make it easier to ensure that the project is completed to your standards. Here are some things you can do before and after your fence company arrives.

Clear the project space

When the fence company's employees and contractors arrive, they will have your fencing materials and construction equipment with them. Make sure their workspace is clear and open so that they will have room to work.

Point out anything special to the work foreman

If your work space has any special requirements or details, make sure to point them out to the work foreman **before** any work begins. Examples of these special requirements could include underground wires, in-ground sprinkler systems, the location of a swimming pool or a gate that needs to remain closed. It is your responsibility to make sure the crew is aware of these things.

Make sure the fencing company's crew has a place to park and to put their equipment

The contractors will most likely need a place to park their vehicles that is convenient to both you and them. If you cannot clear a space in the driveway, make sure there is room on the street. Also, make sure the crew knows where they can put their equipment so that it will not damage your property or gardens. By giving the crew the appropriate space to do their job, you limit the chances of them damaging your property.

Make sure the crew knows about pets, children or anything else regarding your property

If you have pets or children, make sure they stay away from the crew while they are working. Some people are more afraid of pets than others and children can get in the way easily.

Make sure the crew knows whether or not they are allowed inside the house or property's building.

This is helpful if you are providing a bathroom to the crew. If you are allowing them inside, make sure they know which bathroom they are allowed to use and which door they should enter and exit from. Clear a space inside the property if the crew is allowed in and put all pets in another space.

Stay out of the crew's way

During the actual installation and construction process, it is best to stay out of the crew's way. Let them do their job and try not to interfere with the proceedings unless something is wrong. These people are professionals and will do their job if you let them. If you must speak with the crew, do so through the foreman or whoever is in charge.

Carefully review the project once it is completed

It is essential that you carefully review the work after it is completed, hopefully with the foreman or another representative of the company. Look at the construction details and make sure the fence was installed or constructed to your specifications. Make sure all of the posts are properly set and that fence is well measured and that it fits together properly. Make sure that all of the construction equipment and excess materials have been removed. Inspect the work area for property damage. Report all problems or details to the foreman and let them see them in person. **Never** release the final payment until you are satisfied with the job. You can call the company and speak with a manager if you do have a problem. If the company is giving you a hard time about fulfilling their contractual obligations you can always file a complaint with your local Chamber of Commerce or Better Business Bureau. Always give the company a chance to make it right before you damage their reputation. Also, if the fence company did an excellent job, be sure to recommend them to others or to give them a good review. You could end up helping someone else find the best fencing company for their needs.

Conclusion

The right fence can vastly improve the functionality and appearance of your property. The right fence company can ensure that the fence is properly installed and that it looks great. A good fence installation company will make the entire process of choosing a fence and getting it installed on your property easy and stress free. They will make sure you find the right type of fence for your needs. They will make sure that the fence looks great and does its job. They can also help make sure that your new fence remains intact for as long as possible. For all of these reasons it is highly recommended that you do your research and find a reputable and high quality fence company. Your property will thank you!