



LONE STAR  
LEGAL AID

# TEXAS WINTER STORM 2021

## AVOID HOME REPAIR FRAUD

### 1. Get several bids.

- Try to get written bids or estimates, and warranties from at least three different contractors. Check out the contractor.
- For the 2021 Texas Winter Storm, Governor Abbott waived certain regulations for certain registered and qualified Plumber's Apprentices in Texas. These waivers allow a Plumber's Apprentice, who has met all other qualifications to temporarily perform plumbing repairs without 'direct' supervision by a licensed plumber so long as the Plumber's Apprentice works under the general supervision of a responsible Master Plumber.<sup>1</sup>
- Try to use only licensed trade contractors and request proof of a current license.
- FEMA does not certify contractors.<sup>2</sup>
- The Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners does not regulate prices charged by plumbers.<sup>3</sup>
- Find out whether or not the estimate is for one price for the complete and final job or an hourly rate.
- Make sure that you understand exactly what work is to be performed and how the company expects to be paid.

### 2. Get the contractor's full name, address, and phone number.

- Ask for references and call them.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau and courthouse for criminal history and civil cases against the contractor.
- For repairs that cost more than \$10,000, ask the contractor for a copy of their Certificate of Registration with the Texas Residential Construction Commission.
- Be careful when dealing with contractors who have out-of-state license plates. Get it in writing.
- Obtain the name of the Responsible Master Plumber for the company

<sup>1</sup> Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: <https://tsbpe.texas.gov/latest-updates/>

<sup>2</sup> FEMA.gov: <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20210222/dont-get-scammed-protect-yourself-contractor-fraud>

<sup>3</sup> Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: <https://tsbpe.texas.gov/consumer-information/>

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- Check for licensed plumbers  
here: <https://tsbpe.texas.gov/consumer-information/> <sup>4</sup>
- Check for licensed electricians, HVAC professionals  
here: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/> <sup>5</sup>

### 3. Get a written contract.

- Read the contract carefully.
- Specify the work to be done.
- Specify the price:
- Identify the costs for both labor and materials.
- Don't sign anything you don't understand.

### 4. Control the money.

- Do not pay for the entire job up front before the work has been completed.
- Try to pay as little as possible up front.
- It is against the law for contractors in disaster areas to take any money up front unless they have a local office in your county or one county over for at least one year.
- Insist on waiting to pay the full amount until after the work is finished.
- You are protected by special rules if the contractor does not have a local office in your county or the next county over.
- Do not make the final payment until you have inspected the work. Make sure you are completely satisfied with the repairs.
- Do not pay in cash.

Report bad contractors to Better Business Bureau, the Texas Attorney General, the local district attorney, and Lone Star Legal Aid.

**Disaster Legal Assistance Hotline: 1-800-504-7030**

<sup>4</sup> Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: <https://tsbpe.texas.gov/portfolio/find-a-license-registration/>

<sup>5</sup> Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/>

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