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 Abbot 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. ¹
   - Try to use only licensed trade contractors and request proof of a current license.
   - FEMA does not certify contractors. ²
   - The Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners does not regulate prices charged by plumbers. ³
   - 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

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¹ Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: https://tsbpe.texas.gov/latest-updates/
³ Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: https://tsbpe.texas.gov/consumer-information/
Check for licensed plumbers here: https://tsbpe.texas.gov/consumer-information/
Check for licensed electricians, HVAC professionals here: https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/

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

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4 Texas State Board of Plumbers Examiners: https://tsbpe.texas.gov/portfolio/find-a-license-registration/
5 Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation: https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/