

2 June 2005

Top 5 tips for householders dealing with workmen:

1. Be pro-active! Ask how the workman plans to handle the emergency and how long he expects it to take. Discussing this up front gives workmen boundaries to work in, and shows that you're not a passive push-over.
2. Explain the "house rules" before work begins. If clearing up after workmen gets your blood boiling, then say so. Different people have different likes and dislikes - workmen will appreciate the clarification.
3. Discuss the estimated cost upfront and don't be scared to ask how costs are worked out. If the final bill exceeds the estimate ask for a transparent bill break-down and explanation.
4. If you're uncomfortable with handing out keys and security codes, then don't. Once the initial emergency is sorted out there's no reason why you can't arrange a suitable time for follow-up work.
5. Ask to see personal ID and company business cards. Workmen should be able to show you details of liability insurance and proof of accreditations or qualifications.

Top 5 "etiquette" tips for workmen dealing with householders:

1. Ensure you are accredited to a reputable trade association – this will give your customer greater peace of mind in terms of right of recourse, should something go wrong, and also in terms of security. Householders will feel more at ease with an accredited workman than a complete stranger.
2. Be consumer-friendly: Give consumers alternative payment options, including debit cards, cheques or the website. Rogue traders often only accept cash, so having this as your only payment option will cause alarm bells to ring.
3. Understand that householders aren't trained workman - that's why they've hired you for the job. Before leaving, summarise what's been done, what to expect and always offer a follow-up number should further assistance be needed.
4. As far as possible, finish one job before starting another. This is the number one annoyance for householders, especially if it means repeatedly waiting at home to provide access for your visits.
5. Be aware that women particularly can feel vulnerable and nervous. Act professionally and sensitively, especially if a woman is at home alone.

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