

How to Choose a Garage Door Repair Company

THE D&AS TOP SEVEN TIPS

By Tom Wadsworth

In 2008, the Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota developed its "Top ten tips for choosing a garage door repair company." The list was created in response to a rash of complaints about repair companies that charged grossly excessive prices, performed unneeded repairs, did shoddy work, and/or other questionable practices.

The list was good, but it badly needs updating for the Google era. If your area is having a problem with unethical repair companies, here is our new and condensed list that may be useful for sharing with customers or for posting on your website.

2 Beware of the repair specialist.

Many unethical garage door companies intentionally target repair work because (1) customers are desperate for a quick fix and won't get other bids, (2) customers don't know the real cost of garage door parts, and (3) customers don't know a necessary repair from a bogus one.

If you get one bid from a company that focuses on repair, get another bid from a long-established company that does garage door sales and service.

4 BE WARY OF PHONES ANSWERED GENERICALLY, SUCH AS "GARAGE DOORS" OR "DOOR SERVICE."

This tactic is used by slippery companies that operate under so many names that they can't even answer their own phones honestly. If a company answers its phone strangely, ask them, "What company is this?" If they balk at this simple, honest question, hang up and call someone else.

6 Beware of the name game.

Many unethical companies operate under several names so they can get more phone calls and make it difficult for customers to track them down later. Make sure that their name on their Google ad/listing matches the name on their website. And check the list of "alternate business names" on the company's BBB review. If it looks shady, call someone else.

7 Check their address.

Does their website list their street address? Many (but not all) rip-off companies operate only with (1) heavy advertising, (2) a cell phone, and (3) a pickup truck, but no storefront. Sometimes, to give the illusion of being an established business, they will publish a phony address. Check out their address on Google Street View to see if it really exists. If not, call somebody else.

1 Get bids from two or three companies.

You may be in a hurry to get your door fixed, but are you prepared to pay \$500 to \$1,000 for a \$150 repair? Getting multiple bids is *the best way* to avoid getting scammed. In most markets, a second bid alone will reveal a rip-off.

You can get these bids quickly over the phone. But when the technician arrives, let him know that he must get your permission before exceeding the bid. Don't be afraid to reject any proposed extra repairs.

3 Check the company's BBB Business Review at www.bbb.org.

If a company has a bad rating from the BBB, call someone else. But be aware that some A+ ratings from the BBB don't necessarily indicate a clean company. Some unethical firms have learned to get BBB complaints resolved quickly. A company may have hundreds of angry customers who never thought to file a complaint with the BBB.

5 Beware of excessive advertising.

The top position on Google or the first ad in the Yellow Pages does not necessarily indicate a reputable company. In some cases, heavy advertising can actually indicate a *disreputable* company.

The business model of rip-off companies is built on excessive advertising that is designed to get their guy to be the first and only technician in your garage. Massive advertising expense is actually a key reason why some companies must charge high prices.

Look closely at the ads for excessive appeals. Beware of promises of many discounts and low prices, same-day service, phony-looking reviews or testimonials, and especially unverifiable claims such as "5 star" or "rated #1."

And watch out for \$29 service fees. We've seen many final invoices with a low \$29 service fee, yet with the total bill exceeding \$1,000 and packed with exorbitant parts prices and unnecessary repairs.

Note: Some good companies may fail the test of Tips #2 to #7. Tip #1 is your best defense against a rip-off artist. ■

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