



Gerald Peters (left) and Mike Buck co-host a call-in radio program on KHVH called "Fix it Fridays."

Choosing a licensed contractor guarantees work is done right

There is considerable misinformation circulating, particularly among real estate agents and brokers in general, that home and condo owners and property management companies have no choice but to hire an unlicensed handyman, even in violation of the state's \$1,000 aggregate limit for unlicensed work.

The misconception is that licensed contractors are not available or don't want to do miscellaneous lower cost work, which is not the case, particularly in Hawaii's soft current economy. Choosing a licensed contractor always guarantees you are protected by stringent State of Hawaii contractor licensing and performance rules, and have a means by which to be assured that you will get your work done, and done right.

The question remains, however, regardless of knowing whether an unlicensed handyman can do the work, or even if he or she will run off with a client's money without finishing the work, whether it is worth it to gamble with unlicensed services because of the presumption that home owners can save money? In other words, can a licensed contractor provide all the assurances and benefits of Hawaii's licensing program background, but also be competitively priced despite the unlicensed handyman not having the insurance and other costs of a real

contractor?

The answer used to always be "no," and unlicensed handymen got (and still get) a lot of work, which creates a lot of problems. However, one mid-size licensed company, HPS Construction Services, Ltd., has been working hard for five years to beat the old paradigm about home owners, realtors, and property managers having no choice but to gamble with unlicensed and mostly inexperienced handymen.

HPS's secret, besides hard work, is to continuously do a lot of projects in order to spread the licensed contractor costs over a wider base so that end customers don't pay any more. In fact, this often saves homeowners money both over handymen and over having a major specialty contractor with only one or two crews bidding on their projects.

More HPS secrets? Provide free estimates in person, over the phone and via the Internet. And now, for the first time in Hawaii, HPS provides a live, real-time, call-in program on a leading talk/news radio program.

For nearly five years, HPS Construction Services, Ltd. has pioneered a licensed handyman service for the public on Oahu and Maui. The unique part of the service is that HPS General Manager Gerald Peters, produces content and co-hosts a weekly drive-time, non-infomercial, call-in show with Mike Buck, whom many consider the dean of real

news and information talk radio hosts in Hawaii.

The show is called "Fixitfridays" on "The Mike Buck Show." Aired live 3-4 p.m. Fridays on AM Radio 830 KHVH, it's heard on most islands and usually repeats each Friday at 6 p.m. Peters and Buck take callers' questions and, if the answers aren't readily available from Peters' many years of contracting and handyman experience, he is pledged to check with the program's licensed experts for plumbing, electricity, masonry, swimming pools, tree trimming and every other segment.

The show's Web site is fixitfridays.com, and you can learn more about HPS by Googling HPS Construction Services, or by visiting hurricaneprotect.com, specialty area HPS pioneered over 15 years ago. HPS also is pioneering so-called "plug-in" kitchen and bath upgrades and remodels, which have become a means to modernize kitchens at a usual 30-35 percent savings over what it traditionally costs.

HPS and Gerald Peters can also be reached by phone at 808-847-4400.

BIA-Hawaii Remodelers

Members of the BIA-Hawaii Remodelers (BHR), the remodeling and restoration arm of the Building Industry Association (BIA) of Hawaii, will be offering helpful information on remodeling, landscaping and design over the next several weeks in this column. We know you will find these columns loaded with helpful information.

Aloha,

The popularity and significance of green design is growing every year. Most of the talk about green design is focused on energy efficiency – increased building insulation, Energy Star appliances, double pane windows and solar water heaters. However, green design addresses many more aspects of the typical home and building. In fact, green design, at its best, views the home from a whole building perspective over the structure's life cycle (or cradle to cradle).

Some of the lesser-known green design strategies address water conservation, rainwater harvesting, material resources and efficiency, adaptable design, deconstruction, indoor environmental quality (i.e. thermal comfort, acoustics, day lighting and air quality) and durability.

Let's look at durability and air quality in a little more depth. For durability, you need to look beyond "first costs" for your home project. As the proverb goes, "penny wise but dollar foolish," this might be the case without further assessment. Durability should be considered from a life cost perspective that included first cost as well as lifetime maintenance, repair and eventual replacement.

Here is a quick example: You need a gutter on your house. The lowest bid does not include flashing, but it is less than the next bid so it seems like an easy decision to save some money. But without that flashing, water will get between the gutter and the fascia. The moisture may then migrate to the roof sheathing, and both can rot. The spikes that support the gutter get loose, and the next heavy rain fills the gutter pulling it away from the rotting fascia. You now need to replace the fascia and part of the eave, and get a new gutter again. If the project would have been done with life cost and durability in mind the first time, this extra work, expense and aggravation could have been avoided.

Regarding indoor air quality, you can ask for and purchase less toxic paint and sealants, ask for no-VOC (volatile organic compounds) or low-VOC. Ask for and purchase no-added urea formaldehyde plywood particle board and similar products. Go online and learn about the health implications of both VOCs and urea formaldehyde. Once you have the knowledge about your health and how your home factors into this, you will naturally want to use healthier products and stop using the toxic ones.

You may be wondering what makes durability and healthy indoor environments "green"? The answer is simple – the longer something lasts the better for the environment it is because less resources are used, less fuel is used for shipping and less waste is going to the landfill. So, by simply thinking and selecting for durability, you are reducing your carbon footprint and benefiting from life cycle costing as well. Using less toxic products not only improves indoor air quality, but it also means less toxic waste is used in its production. Good for you, good for the environment. We all win.

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