

LET'S REMODEL

Beware, change orders could prove costly

This column is prepared by the Michigan Remodeling Association.

Q: I am currently building a large addition on the back of my house. My husband and I are thinking of making a few changes to the blue prints, but we have already started construction. Our remodeling contractor says that he does not like to write change orders, and they will cost me. What is the proper way to handle the change orders?

A: First of all, it is important to understand what change orders are. Despite hard work between homeowner and contractor to finalize all details prior to the start of a job changes are likely. It is always important to ask a contractor for his policy on change orders in writing before starting the job. Many reputable contractors have their own preprinted change order forms. Other important questions to ask include: Is there a charge for a change order? Does every change need to be on a change order and is there a limit to the number of changes? How is payment handled? Change orders interrupt the rhythm of the project and can slow down construction dramatically due to the intricate



scheduling of the subcontractors and the stages of the work to be done. Change orders should be numbered one, two, etc. and dated. The form should document specifically what the change is and the cost. It is also good to have each change order total what the resulting contract total is. There are instances where after several changes, the homeowner has lost track of what the final bill will be. It is important to have a well thought out plan before you start the construction process. Your ability to communicate to your remodeler from

the beginning will save you a big headache, lots of time and plenty of money.

Adam Helfman, Fairway Construction, Southfield, 810-354-9310.

Q: What is the difference between standard size and high-efficiency gutters and downspouts?

A: When replacing gutters, most homes only require a standard size. This is normally a 5-inch gutter with 2- by 3-inch downspouts. "High efficiency" or larger gutters are recommended in areas where there are many trees because leaves can clog the gutters. These high-efficiency units are normally 6-inch gutters and 3- by 4-inch downspouts. The larger size also is less likely to be bent out of alignment by freezing ice and snow.

If there is a long stretch or run of gutter with room for enough standard-size downspouts, larger downspouts may be used to handle the water flow. These larger downspouts are also useful when one run of gutter empties into an-

other run and they share a single downspout. High-efficiency gutters and downspouts cost more than the standard size. You should discuss with your contractor the best combination of sizes for your home. New gutters should control the water flow correctly by using the proper combinations of sizes. Understanding which size is best for which area of your home will help you get the most value for your money.

Jim Jeneraux, J. Willis Company, Walled Lake, 810-960-0202.

If you have home improvement questions, call Gayle Walters at the Michigan Remodeling Association (MRA) at 810-335-3232 or, send questions to "Let's Remodel," 2187 Orchard Lake Road, Suite 103, Sylvan Lake, MI 48320. Answers are provided by members of the MRA, the local chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Members include professional contractors, manufacturers, wholesalers and lenders representing all facets of residential and light commercial remodeling. For more information or a free copy of the MRA membership roster call 810-335-3232.

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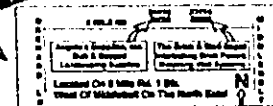
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