

Shoddy from page 1G

"Unless you practice a little reality, you are never going to be satisfied," he said.

He once had a customer who was upset about the flashing on the house's roof at the skylights. "They (the skylights) were 100 percent right. There were no deficiencies (in workmanship, materials or design)."

In that case, there are only two options — live with the flashing or forget the skylights, he said. The customer would accept neither option.

Garfalo suggested that people who have questions should seek a second opinion if they are unhappy or have concerns.

Garfalo said he doesn't want to imply that all builders are good builders — indeed, some builders may even be bad builders.

"It's incumbent upon the home-builder (the customer) to make sure the builder is qualified to build a home," he said.

Is the builder well-established?

Does he have a place of business? Does he have a track record? A license? These are all questions the buyer should ask.

"I tell everyone who buys a home from me to take the contract to an attorney before they sign it," he said.

Bernard Gileberman, president of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan, said it's not surprising that the number of lawsuits and complaints filed against builders is so high. Buying

a house, he said, is a very emotional issue.

If something goes wrong, people are naturally going to be upset about it, he said.

The key for any person who has a problem with a house, he said, is to remain calm.

Builders have systems in place to deal with construction problems. Pre-closing walk-throughs, follow-up visits, post-sale questionnaires — "we're asking people to be critical,"

Above all, Gileberman said, try not to become hostile. He has had people come in screaming at the top of their lungs without even giving him a chance to fix any problems.

"If a person bought a bad house, the first thing they should do is send a letter explaining the problem," he said. With most builders, that's all it takes.

Too often, the first response of some people is to threaten a lawsuit — that leads to hostilities between

the builder and buyer, he said.

Gileberman said there's no need to threaten lawsuits, or become hostile; a calm, businesslike letter should get the results the homeowner wishes.

"Lawsuits are the expensive way to go — I don't think suing someone is the best solution," he said. "I've always believed that two adults, when they sit down together in a calm manner — they can work out their problems."

Complain from page 1G

lative law judge who will issue a report.

If the builder is still found to be at fault, a report from the law judge or investigator will be forwarded to the state Residential Builders and Maintenance and Alteration board — a commission made up of builders, building officials, state officials and regular people — who will render a judgment.

Judgment can result in dismissal

ing the complaint, fining the builder or ordering restitution to the complainant in the form of money, or suspending or revoking the builder's license.

Fines assessed against the builders can be as high as \$10,000; restitution orders have no limits.

J.W. Elserman, discipline action coordinator with the department enforcement division, said most builders comply with the orders.

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