

Choosing A Septic System Service Company by Doug Wholey, LILWA Vice President

Without prior experience or at least some basic knowledge about septic systems, it's often not an easy task to know which companies will provide quality service and fair pricing. In order to help consumers find companies that are competent, professional and reliable, we have put together a list of points to consider when contracting for service.

Licensing - Service companies operating in Suffolk County are required to have both a Suffolk County Consumer Affairs License and a Suffolk County Scavenger Waste License. In Nassau County, service companies must have a Nassau Consumer Affairs license a valid permit to use the county's sewage treatment plant in East Rockaway. Companies serving Sea Cliff must also have a special permit issued by the Village of Sea Cliff. Ask your service provider to provide you with the numbers of all the appropriate licenses and permits for your area to ensure that the company is operating and dumping septic waste legally. You might also want to call the Nassau or Suffolk County Consumer Affairs offices and/or the Better Business Bureau to make sure no claims have been filed against the contractor you are considering.

Insurance - As with any contractor working on your property, it is of utmost importance that the septic system service company carries adequate liability insurance and workmen's compensation insurance. You can protect yourself by asking to see insurance certificates.

Trade Certification - To ensure that your contractor has the experience and knowledge to solve your problem, ask if he has been certified by a recognized trade organization such as LILWA.

Questions - Feel free to ask any questions you may have regarding a company's credentials or the service you may need or about septic systems, in general. A reputable contractor will gladly discuss your system and the specifics of your job. They may also have printed materials they can send you prior to the service call. If a company will not take the time to answer your questions, you might want to look into finding another that will. You can use information contained in this site to help you formulate your questions.

Prices - While it is not usually possible for a contractor to give you an exact price prior to performing the service, a reputable contractor will clearly define their pricing structure with you beforehand. When the job is complete, the service provider should provide a written breakdown for the cost of the services he provided and a request a signature indicating your acceptance. Be wary of companies that advertise extremely low prices compared to other companies. If the price seems 'too good to be true', chances are that it is.

References -Whenever possible, it's a good idea to ask the prospective service provider for any references they might be able to provide, especially from customers located near your job. Conditions vary from area to area and it helps to use a contractor who's familiar with your locale. When it comes to system installations, references are especially important. A contractor should be able to provide a list of clients for whom they have provided services similar to those you're seeking.

Image -You can often get a fairly good idea as to the degree of professionalism a contractor possesses by the image he projects. Clean, well-maintained trucks and equipment and uniformed, courteous technicians usually indicate that the company you are dealing with will provide professional, high quality services.