



Regulated Industries Complaints Office

235 S. Beretania Street, Ninth Floor

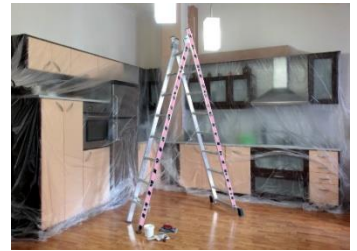
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

cca.hawaii.gov/rico

MORE... REMODELING TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES

Remodeling is not for the faint of heart. If you've lived through it, you already have some idea. If you haven't, here are some thoughts following unexpected repairs to a 40-year-old bathroom in Honolulu.

Be prepared. Houses age and sometimes, just sometimes, things go horribly wrong. Be prepared by keeping a list of licensed contractors, plumbers, and electricians that you (or family, or friends) regularly rely on. Keep notes on what kinds of work (building an addition or unclogging a shower drain) they've done – like most experts, they may specialize in certain areas. If it's an emergency, and the person from your list isn't available, ask if they can recommend someone who might be available.



Good planning is still everything. Think about what you want, then think about it some more. You'll have to make a lot of decisions. Take something as simple as the depth of the bathtub or the color grout that best matches the tile you've chosen. Your contractor will need to know your decisions in advance, so try to picture the final product and be as detail oriented as possible.

Practical plumbing. Think about your home and your existing bathroom. Most bathrooms have a single "wet wall" (a single wall that contains the plumbing pipes for your tub, toilet, and sink in a continuous line). Some bathrooms have an L-shape "wet zone" with plumbing running behind two adjacent walls in the shape of an "L." There are also three wall layouts. The cost of your remodel or repair will go up if you move plumbing lines. If you're trying to keep to costs down, keep your new bathroom close to the existing plumbing, consider a single "wet wall" or L-shaped "wet zone," and remember, the layout of your bathroom will depend on your budget.

Back to back. If your home has two bathrooms, both bathrooms may share the same "wet wall." A long-time leak behind one shower may cause problems in the other. If repairing or replacing one side, ask your contractor to look for damage on the other.

Certain materials take time to order. Some materials, although displayed by a retailer, may need to be specially ordered. Experienced contractors, plumbers, and electricians generally know what's available commercially and what may take time to get here. Before the project starts, make a list of the things you will need (for example, tile, faucets, towel rods) – ask what items the contractor will need first, ask what items may take time to order, and ask if the contractor has certain brands he/she recommends. Delays may mean a second trip for your contractor, plumber, or electrician if materials aren't on the jobsite and ready to go.

Shopping for materials and supplies. Keep your receipts and make a note of each store's return policy, especially if items you're purchasing need to be specially ordered. If you change your mind or if you've bought the wrong thing, you may end up returning or exchanging unused items. Keep a running list of items purchased, stick to a budget, and remember to hold some in reserve to cover additional, unanticipated costs. As your project progresses, hold on to instructions for care and cleaning that you'll need later.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Document your project as it progresses. Be sure to take before and after pictures, and, be sure to take pictures of the plumbing that's going to be behind your walls. Interior pictures may help with future repairs or remodels. Remember to take pictures of materials used and their item numbers for future reference. (This will make ordering replacement parts in the future much, much easier.)

Remodeling is messy business. Remodeling is messy, so be prepared for dirt, dust, and debris to be *everywhere*. Before the project starts, cover your floors with cardboard from your favorite warehouse store. Use removable tape to secure it to the ground. Be sure to eliminate any tripping hazards and cover any pathways workers may use to bring equipment and materials in and out. Use clear plastic poly sheeting to cover furniture, rugs, and especially appliances. And, hanging plastic sheeting over doorways can help keep a room relatively dust free.

Be prepared to sweep or vacuum every day. Don't use your high-end vacuum cleaner which could be damaged from the fine dust. (Hopefully you have an inexpensive vacuum you were planning on getting rid of or a shop vacuum with a fine dust bag.)

Don't expect Fido or Tiger to be happy. In addition to the mess, you should also expect a lot of noise. Have a plan in place for your pets, especially since doors and gates may be left open for workers to come and go.

Be prepared. Even if your job doesn't call for an electrician, you may want to have some names ready in case some wiring needs to be fixed. If you don't have a name, your contractor may recommend a licensed electrician that he or she works with regularly.

Budget high. This goes along with expecting surprises. Fix your budget then add a healthy percent for emergencies. If you have the money to take care of the extra added expenses, you'll feel good. If you come in "under budget," you'll feel great.

Be available or be around. Things come up, decisions have to be made, and someone has to be there to make last minute decisions. If a contractor can't get a hold of you, he or she may go ahead and make the decision without you. Although it may be easier for professionals to work on site without the homeowner underfoot, if you can be there occasionally, why not? You'll get a good education once you see what goes into building your house, and if you ever need to do it again, you'll know what to look for.

Most importantly, hire a licensed contractor. There are lots of reasons why. Not only do licensed contractors have the training and experience necessary to obtain a contractor's license, licensed contractors have liability insurance and are responsible if a worker is injured on a jobsite. This protects you as a homeowner from putting your property at risk if anything is damaged on your project or if anyone is injured. Licensed contractors can also apply for and obtain the necessary building permits for your project. Be sure any plumbing work is done by a licensed plumber. Keep in mind, "**master plumbers**" and "**journey worker plumbers**" are licensed to direct and supervise work. **Apprentices** can only work under supervision of licensed journey worker or master plumber. Be sure any electrical work is done by a licensed electrician.

RICO investigates unlicensed contracting and violations of Hawaii's licensing laws. To check licensing status or for information about hiring a licensed professional, call the Consumer Resource Center at 587-4272 or visit the State's website at: cca.hawaii.gov/rico.

RESOURCES

The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), and its Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO), offer tools, tips, and services you can use to check out an individual or business. Information is available by calling (808) 587-4272 or online at cca.hawaii.gov/business_online. For information about filing a complaint or to report unlicensed activity, call RICO's Consumer Resource Center at (808) 587-4272 or visit us online at cca.hawaii.gov/rico. To call Oahu-RICO, dial the following toll free numbers: Kauai 274-3141, extension 74272; Maui 984-2400, extension 74272; Big Island 974-4000, extension 74272; Molokai and Lanai 1-800-468-4644, extension 74272, followed by the # sign.

RICO is the enforcement arm for over 45 professional boards, commissions, and programs that are administratively attached to the DCCA. RICO receives complaints, conducts investigations, and prosecutes licensing law violations. RICO also prosecutes unlicensed activity through the issuance of citations and by filing civil lawsuits in the Circuit Courts. RICO works to resolve consumer complaints where appropriate and provides consumer education about various issues relating to licensing and consumer protection. RICO also administers the State Certified Arbitration Program (SCAP) for "lemon" motor vehicle claims.

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