

Homeowners: Do Your Homework Before Hiring A Contractor

Is your home in need of improvements? With home prices escalating, many homeowners are choosing to keep their homes and update them or make improvements. Consumers need to be aware that not all contractors operate within the law.

You can avoid becoming a victim of an unscrupulous contractor by checking out and verifying the company is well-established. Contact the county's Consumer Protection Agency to find out if any complaints have been filed against a contractor. Always verify that your contractor is licensed as required by your state. Be sure your contractor has insurance coverage for personal liability, worker's compensation, and property damage.

Ask for copies of insurance certificates. This will prevent you from being held liable for any injuries or damages that occur during your project. Ask for a list of references for similar projects. Make sure you contact those references and see the work.

A competent contractor will get all the necessary permits. Be suspicious if the contractor asks you to get the permits. If your contractor plans on using subcontractors, meet the subcontractors and verify they have insurance coverage, licenses and verify if any complaints have been filed against them.

Consumers should think twice about doing business with contractors that solicit door-to-door, offer you a discount for referrals or only accept payment in cash. Be wary of high pressure sales tactics and never pay for the entire job upfront.

Consumers should never agree to financing provided by the contractor without shopping around and comparing loan terms. Never allow a salesman to talk you into signing any document you haven't read, don't understand or has blank spaces. Never deed your property to anyone.

For licensing and permit information, contact the Hillsborough County Development Services at 272-5600. If you need additional information on this topic or would like to verify if any complaints have been filed against your contractor, call the Hillsborough County Consumer Protection Agency at 903-3430.



Tops In The State

At a recent awards ceremony, Commissioner Pat Frank recognized Luke Armstrong with the Dale Mabry Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant for two awards that the plant received from the Florida Water Environment Association. One declared them the best in the state for safety, and the another named them the second-best plant overall.

Hillsborough County Communicator

Published every month by the Communications Department to inform residents about the programs, services and activities of their County government. For more information, call Public Information at 272-5314 or the Hillsborough Information Line at 272-5900.

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Hillsborough County COMMUNICATOR

Keeping You Informed About County Government
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County Commissioners Congratulate Moral Courage Winners!



Commissioners Kathy Castor and Jim Norman, center presented the 2004 Hillsborough County Moral Courage Award to Lynn Smelt and Cindy Rodriguez of the Egypt Lake Area Citizens Group. The Egypt Lake group was recognized for their ongoing fight against TECO for placing large power transmission poles in their neighborhoods.

County Employees Get High Marks For Telephone Courtesy

Hillsborough County government received high scores on phone courtesy from citizens.

That's according to an independent survey conducted by the Florida Institute of Government at the University of South Florida. The survey involved an anonymous review of how well county employees answer the phones when citizens call. Researchers made 200 calls to 13 different departments, posing as citizens with various questions.

Results were very positive. The survey found that 99 percent of the calls were answered promptly, within three rings.

Researchers also found that employees tried to help the caller reach the correct office 100 percent of the time, when they were not calling the right location. They also found that once the correct office was reached, callers received excellent service.

More than 90 percent of the time the employees listened to their request completely, and were helpful and friendly, according to the survey. Employees also were reported to do a very good job at finding referral information quickly for the callers when they were asked.

Some improvements suggested by the survey include improving access for Spanish-speaking citizens, updating and checking voice mail message more frequently, and providing better information to citizens when they are being transferred.

Questions? Problems?

Call...



272-5900

Your Hillsborough County Information Line

UNINCORPORATED HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY RESIDENTS:

Confused When To Sprinkle?

{ Yard watering restrictions now vary according to what part of the county you live in. }
{ You can water before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on the following days according to the map: }

If you live in the South-Central Service Area

(shaded area on map) and receive water from the county or use well or surface water for your sprinkling, you can water once a week on the following days:

- Mondays** Addresses that end in **0 or 1**
- Tuesdays** Addresses that end in **2 or 3**
- Wednesdays** Addresses that end in **4 or 5**
- Thursdays** Addresses that end in **6 or 7**
- Fridays** Address that end in **8 or 9**, locations that have **no addresses** like common areas or locations that have multiple addresses like office complexes



Remember...you can always water your plants by hand whenever you want to with an automatic shut-off hose.

Reclaimed water use is exempt from these restrictions.

These restrictions are in effect until May 31, 2005.

South-Central Service Area also includes several other unincorporated communities served by the Hillsborough County Water Department noted on the map.



If you live elsewhere in unincorporated Hillsborough County, you can sprinkle twice a week on the following days:

- Tuesday and/or Saturday** addresses ending in **even** numbers or addresses ending in **A-M**
- Wednesday and/or Sunday** addresses ending in **odd** numbers, ending in **N-Z** or locations with **no address** like common areas

Still Have Questions?

Call the Water Restrictions hotline at 275-7094 or visit the county's website at: www.hillsboroughcounty.org, click on the "A-Z Index," and select "Water Restrictions."

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners

No Warnings This Time!

Under the new watering restriction guidelines, property owners who don't follow the rules will be given a fine the first time they are caught by Water Department conservation inspectors. Warning citations will no longer be given out.

Fines will given out as follows: First offense: \$102; Second offense: \$202; Third offense: Mandatory court appearance and fines up to \$500, with additional court costs of at least \$40.

For more information about the Hillsborough County water restriction rules and fines, please contact the Water Restrictions hotline at (813) 275-7094.

