



Homeowner News

SUMMER
2011

News & Information For The Customers Of Pickett Plumbing, L.P.

8 Simple Ways to Select a Superior Service Company

Selecting any type of home service company is a frightening prospect for most homeowners. Here's how to increase the odds that you will make as good of a decision for other industries as you have for plumbing when you selected Pickett Plumbing.

This is a different list than you'll typically see from a consumer magazine or government agency. Few people, for example, want to call three to five companies for an estimate, especially if you need service quickly. People simply want someone who will do a good job at a fair price with the minimum amount of hassle. Almost no one is going to call past customers, check with the licensing board, or investigate the amount of insurance carried. Our list focuses on things you can do quickly and practically.

Use Social Media

Are you social? Asking your friends through Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, and other social media sites is a great way to find a good service company and minimize the odds you will select a poor one. It's the fastest way to ask a lot of people for a referral. To improve the quality of the information you get, ask your friends and contacts to share their personal experiences.

Use Review Sites

The next best thing to recommendations from friends are public review sites. There are three types of review sites. The first charges you and charges the companies listed. You can pay for this information if you want, but the quality of the reviews is no better than you can find on the second type of review sites, which are the free sites.



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At Pickett Plumbing we strive to provide the best products and services to our customers at affordable prices. Please contact us for all of your plumbing or water conditioning needs. We are happy to help with installation, replacements, maintenance or repairs.

Did you know?

The highest temperature ever recorded was 136°F(58°C) in Africa.

The following are records for the remaining 6 continents: North America 134°F(57°C), Asia 129°(54°), Australia 128°(53°), South America 120°(49°), Europe 118°(48°), Antarctica 59°(15°)

On the Grill! Steak With

Steak Marinade

- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tablespoons minced garlic, from jar is fine
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder

Mushroom Sauce

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 pound sliced mushrooms
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/3 cup white wine
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can beef broth
- salt and pepper to taste

***Tips:** Serve it with a crisp, mixed green salad tossed with your favorite salad dressing.

Supplies

- Charcoal Grill, Gas Grill, or Fry Pan
- Bowls
- Tongs
- Cutting Board

Grilled Steak

1. Marinade steak for 30 minutes to overnight.
2. Notify your plumber as to when his steak will be ready.
3. You can grill or pan fry them in butter.
4. Put marinade steaks on grill at high temperature.
5. Each side of the steak takes 4 minutes (medium rare)
6. When finished, place it on platter and let it rest for 5 minutes.

Mushroom Sauce

1. In the same skillet, sauté the mushrooms, onions and garlic until tender. Add additional oil if necessary.
2. Stir in wine. Bring it to a boil; boil for 1 minute.
3. Add the broth, salt and pepper.
4. Bring to a boil; boil for 6 minutes or until sauce is reduced by half.
5. For two people, serve two steaks with 1-1/2 cups sauce.



Steak Safety

With Summer just around the corner, cooking outdoor is a way to connect with family, this summer, it's important to remember to handle steak safely.

For steak safety - to stay healthy and avoid foodborne illness — USDA advises:

- If product has a "Use-By" Date, follow that date. If product has a "Sell-By" Date or no date, cook or freeze the product, for fresh beef roast, steaks, chops or ribs, cook it within 3 to 5 days. If it's in the freezer it will last until 6 to 12 months.
- Marinate beef in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Boil used marinade before brushing on cooked beef. Discard any uncooked leftover marinade.
- Never brown or partially cook beef to refrigerate and finish cooking later because any bacteria present wouldn't have been destroyed. It is safe to partially pre-cook or microwave beef immediately before transferring it to the hot grill to finish cooking.
- Remember that appliances and outdoor grills can vary in heat. Use a food thermometer to check for safe cooking and doneness of beef.
- Cook all raw beef steaks and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F as measured with a food thermometer .
- For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.



Tell Your Friends About Homeowner News

Or call us and we'll provide them with a free subscription and give you and your friend \$10 gift certificates!

Homeowner News is a quarterly publication of Pickett Plumbing, L.P. It is provided to our customers free of charge. We welcome your suggestions and ideas. Contact us at:
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 P.O. Box 690945
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www.HoustonPlumber.com

8 Simple Ways to Select a Superior Service Company *continued from page 1*

Free sites include Yelp! and Google. In Yelp!, simply select your search term and city to see what reviews are available. For Google, search for the type of service and “near” and the town name. If either fails to return enough entries, try another town, a larger town, or the county.

The final type of review sites are known as slam sites. All they carry are negative reviews. A company’s failure to appear on a slam site usually means the company has few customers. Most large companies eventually appear. Some sites even offer a consulting service to “assist” the business owner with his reviews. Think of this as extortion to make bad reviews disappear. The consulting service makes the usefulness of these sites specious at best. Plus, the least reputable companies are the ones most like to take advantage of the service. Given that the free review sites include both positive and negative experiences, it’s best to avoid the slam sites.

Look at a Company’s Website

Once you start to zero in on a service company, check out the company’s website. A poor website is not necessarily an indicator of poor quality, but it does show less professionalism and an inattention to details compared to companies with good sites. The complete absence of a website should be a red flag. Most professional companies have websites. Most fly-by-nights do not.

Check for Professional Affiliations and Licensing

While you are visiting the company’s website, check for professional affiliations and licensing. Examples of professional affiliations are membership in a trade association like the Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors (PHCC), Quality Service Contractors (QSC), or an industry association. These affiliations are signs that the company is committed to professional improvement. Any company that can write a check can belong to the BBB.

To assure that you get a trained repairman, the state of Texas requires plumbers, HVAC, electricians, pest control to be licensed. Also the license number must appear on all advertisements & their vehicles.

Don’t Expect Something for Nothing & Be Wary of Commissioned Servicemen

Every legitimate business incurs expenses to send a serviceman to your home. Someone has to pay for the wages, vehicle, insurances, benefits, fuel, etc. Be wary of contractors that send the serviceman to your home for free.

Would you trust a commissioned repairman to make honest & unbiased recommendation to you? Are the serviceman paid a commission or by the hour?

Look for Tangible Clues About the Company

Are the company’s trucks professionally marked and clean? If you can recall seeing one of the company’s field service personnel, was he or she wearing a uniform or a dirty pair of jeans and a t-shirt? Did the employee look like someone you want to invite into your home?

Ask Around

While not as efficient as posting a question on social media, call of few trusted friends to ask for recommendations. Call the “centers of influence” you know. Centers of influence are the people who are especially well connected and seem to know everyone in town.

Ask **other service companies** for their recommendations. Many will only recommend companies to their customers they believe will take good care of them.

Trust Your Intuition

In the end, the company you call will be the one you feel best about. Trust your intuition over anything else.

While we do not recommend selecting a company purely on the basis of coupons or discounts, it can influence your decision when it’s a toss-up who to call. If any of your friends need our service, feel free to give them the following coupon for \$30.00 off (or, use it yourself the next time you need work done).



\$30 Off Any Repair

We can help you keep your home or office plumbing in perfect working order.

Pickett Plumbing

713-896-9700

www.HoustonPlumber.com

Not valid with any other offer.

No other discounts apply. Expires 7/30/11

Win a \$100 Gift Card!

Complete and return for a chance to win a \$100 gift card. If you correctly answer the three questions below, we'll enter you in a drawing for a \$100 gift card. Second prize will be a \$50 gift card. All entries must be received by 7/30/2011. Mail to: Pickett Plumbing, P.O. Box 690945, Houston, Texas 77269-0945

True/False Using Social Media to find a contractor is very time consuming.

True/False You must buy a subscription to use all review sites.

True/False A good website shows a company's attention to detail.

Please contact me about:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising opportunities for your favorite charity or school | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing repairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Water filtration/conditioning products |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Water-saving fixtures |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time: _____

Limit 1 entry per person. No purchase necessary. A purchase will not improve your chances of winning. Winner will be selected at random within 30 days of entry deadline. All decisions are final. All entrants agree to contest rules, which require winner to sign a prize and publicity release unless precluded by law. Must be 18 to enter. Failure to comply results in disqualification. Entries void if incomplete or illegible. No responsibility is assumed for lost, late, or illegible entries. Company employees and family members are ineligible. Odds depend on the number of entries received. Acceptance of the prize implies consent to use name and image in promotional material with the prize as compensation. All taxes are the responsibility of the winner.



The Corner

Q. What did the pig say on a hot summer's day?

A. I'm bacon!

Q. How do lamps communicate?

A. Lampost

Q. Which letter is the coolest?

A. Iced T



Quotes for these Times:

A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small bundle. — Benjamin Franklin

If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under. - Ronald Reagan

I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them. — Thomas Jefferson

It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. - Thomas Jefferson

Government always finds a need for whatever money it gets. - Ronald Reagan

Government does not solve problems; it subsidizes them. - Ronald Reagan

Government is like a baby. An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other. - Ronald Reagan

Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives. - Ronald Reagan

Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. - Ronald Reagan

Governments tend not to solve problems, only to rearrange them. - Ronald Reagan