

Beware pool rip-offs BBB warns buyers

Herald Special

Since home building is currently in a "down" cycle, suppliers to the home building industry are looking elsewhere to keep crews busy and businesses together. Swimming pool construction is also included in this cycle, says Paul Tuz, president of the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Toronto.

Even though it's a buyer's market, the Better Business Bureau cautions that some dishonest pool salespeople and builders are still using unethical special sales gimmicks, gimmicks, and other high pressure tactics.

Be cautious if the sales tactics used resemble any of the following:

1. **The Bait-and-Switcher:** The pool "on sale" suddenly is not available since you are interested in buying it. However, there just happens to be a more costly model that the contractor will be happy to "deal" on.

2. **You Be The Model:** Your home, after serious and lengthy consideration by top pool executives, has been carefully chosen as the "model". The salesperson pressures you to be a model in order to get the "best" pool the company

sells at a "reduced" price.

3. **On the Rock:** "Buy now," urges the salesperson, "because you will get a better price which is offered just for this week only...and never to be repeated again."

There are plenty of honest swimming pool contractors Tuz notes, and none of them will pull these ploys to get you to buy. In fact, a reliable contractor should make building and owning a pool easy for you. The contractor should be willing to help you plan the pool from scratch, pick out the equipment, and provide you with options that best serve your pool needs. The contractor also will take care of building permits, provide you with a starting and completion schedule, find financing, and help you with maintenance and other service aspects of owning a swimming pool.

If you have any doubts about contractor selection, telephone the BBB for a reliability report on the contractor in question. The Bureau has reliability reports on specific pool companies in your community.

Some Pool-Buying Guidelines: There are several elements you

should take into consideration before signing a pool-building contract, Mr. Tuz said. First, determine how the pool will be used: for personal recreation, family recreation, physical therapy, entertaining friends, exercise. The pool's use will partly determine what type to buy: above ground or in-ground.

Above-ground pools usually cost less than in-ground types. The above-grounders are constructed with a vinyl lining over a steel, aluminum or wood frame. Some types may be taken down and stored or moved to another location. Maintenance is relatively simple.

In-ground pools are more expensive: excavation special supplies, and lots of labor are required. However, an in-ground pool can be a permanent improvement to the property and may get all - or even more - of your costs back if you sell your home. You will probably be taxed, however, for property improvement.

Other check points include pool insurance, fencing, the existing zoning for pools, site location, local building regulations and restrictions, grading requirements.



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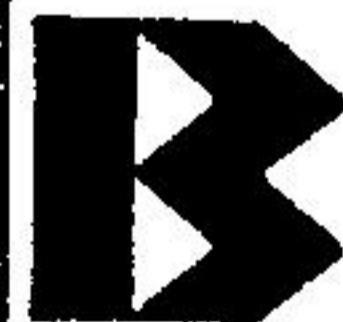
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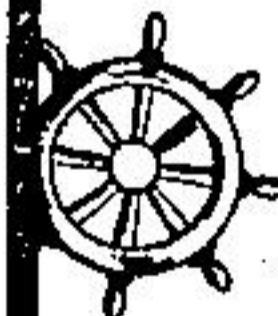
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