

5 Things You Should Know

Before Letting Someone Into Your Business

If you've been thinking of hiring a commercial cleaning service, this guide will show you how to avoid many of the common mistakes property owners and managers make. The cleaning industry is one of the few unregulated industries, and it is easy to get into. Because of this, there is little assurance that you are getting a truly "professional" commercial cleaning service. In order to protect your business, your property and your employees, there are 5 things you should know before letting a janitorial worker into your business.

The Truth About Sub-Contractors

You may be thinking about hiring a cleaning company that offers the lowest price, which at first seems great because it will save you money. And after all, who doesn't want to cut their business expense budget? What you may not realize though, is there are a few commercial cleaning companies in your community who pay their workers illegally because they classify the workers as "sub-contractors". This gives them a cost advantage over professional cleaning companies who hire their workers as employees, following IRS guidelines.

When a company hires a worker as a sub-contractor, the employee is expected to carry the tax burden normally paid by an employer, including employment taxes, Social Security taxes, Medicare, and Unemployment taxes. In addition, the sub-contractor is responsible for their own Worker's Compensation insurance, liability insurance, bond and even equipment. The problem is, 99% of these workers do not even know they are responsible for these expenses because they are being treated as an employee in the eyes of the IRS.

Why should this concern you?

Cleaning companies who hire workers illegally have questionable ethics at best and any reputable building owner or manager would want to steer clear of them.

Insurance

It is very important to ask questions about insurance coverage. Never hire a cleaning company that does not have insurance. You can avoid costly mistakes by hiring a company that has insurance to protect your business and the property within the building in case of damage or injuries to the cleaners while they are on your property.

Make sure they have liability insurance, bonding, and Worker's Compensation coverage. Ask the cleaning company for proof of insurance. The cleaning company can ask their insurance company to fax, email, or mail a copy of the certificate of insurance to you. Every reputable cleaning company will be happy to provide proof of insurance. This will give you peace of mind every time your business is cleaned.

Building Walk-Through

It is important that you have a face-to-face interview and walk-through with the cleaning company. Take note of their appearance; are they well-dressed or in a uniform? Is the vehicle they are driving clean and have advertising for their company? Are they gathering information, taking notes, measuring and asking questions?

It is important to walk through your building so the cleaning company can see the different types of surfaces they will be cleaning and their condition. They need to know how to clean certain surfaces such as marble or granite floors and countertops, because not knowing how to clean those items can lead to costly property damage.

As you walk-through the building, see if they wipe their hand across surfaces or make comments about the current cleaning service. A professional company would not do that.

You should have a list of specifications for services at your location that are broken down into daily, weekly, monthly, and annual tasks. If you don't have a list of specifications, the contractor should have one or offer to generate a customized list for your location.

When reviewing the bid packet or proposal, examine it closely.

- Is it formatted properly and professionally?
- Are there any misspelled words?

Does the proposal cover some of your concerns that were discussed with the contractor? This may very well be the determining factor when selecting a commercial cleaning company. Their attention to detail in the proposal may be a reflection of their service.

You'll also want to ask for references and check them out.

- Is this company reliable?
- How long have they been cleaning your office?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of service provided?

Supplies and Equipment

Ask about the supplies and equipment the cleaning company uses. Do they use upright vacuums or back pack vacuums? Many companies use a combination of both, but back pack vacuums are the industry standard for increased productivity. Most also have Hepa filtration, which helps to keep dust down and particles from becoming airborne.

What cleaning chemicals do they use? Many conventional cleaners can be harmful to janitorial workers and building employees so most cleaning companies are switching to more environmentally friendly products that work as well as conventional cleaners.

Do they use feather dusters, static dusters or microfiber cloths?

Microfiber cloths pick up dust and soil rather than moving it around or making it airborne the way feather dusters and static dusters do.

Ask to see their MSDS Sheets. Cleaning companies are required to carry Material Safety Data Sheets on all cleaning chemicals they use. If they do not provide them to their employees or do not know what they are,

consider this a big red flag. Legally compliant companies care about the safety of their employees and customers, and providing training and MSDS Sheets are part of their normal operating procedures.

Questions You Should Ask

- Do you have liability insurance, bond and Worker's Compensation?
- How long have you been in business?
- Can you show me your company policy manual?
- Can you show me your company safety manual?
- What are your hiring procedures?
- Who does your training?
- How do you provide supervision or follow-up?
- What is your employee turnover rate?
- Tell me about some of your current customers.
- Do your employees wear uniforms and ID badges?
- Can you tell me about the equipment that you'll use at my location?
- Do you have a communications log or a 24-hour call center?
- How do you handle assigning keys and alarm codes to buildings/offices?
- Tell me your process for handling complaints.
- Do your customers sign contracts or agreements?
- How do you handle it when a customer calls and says something's been stolen?
- Do you provide products such as toilet paper, hand towels and hand soap?
- Can you perform any project work such as carpet cleaning, window washing and strip and waxing?
- Is your company or anyone in your company IICRC certified in procedures such as carpet cleaning, upholstery cleaning or tile and grout cleaning?
- Can you show me your federal and state EIN number?
- Do you subcontract any work?
- Do you use environmentally friendly chemicals and equipment?
- Do you have MSDS sheets on all products you use?