

# 5 Things You Should Know Before Letting Someone Into Your Home!

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If you've been thinking of hiring a house cleaning service, this guide will show you how to avoid many of the common mistakes homeowners make. The home 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" home cleaning service. In order to protect your home, your family and your belongings, there are 5 things you should know before letting a house cleaning worker into your home.

## 1. Individual vs Professional Home Cleaning Company

You may be thinking about hiring an individual to clean your home because they charge much less than a professional home cleaning company. And although the price sounds nice, it may cost you in the long run because these people have little regard for you, their customer. You may not even be aware that you are paying them "under the table", meaning they are not operating their business legally.

The reason they are able to charge less is because they are not paying taxes on the money you pay them, and they are not paying other legal expenses like worker's compensation, Social Security, unemployment taxes and insurance. It is your responsibility as the customer to make sure that the individual you hire to clean your home has a legitimate business.

In addition, if you decide to hire an individual you may be considered the employer and will need to file the following forms if you want to comply with state and federal laws:

- Form SS-4 (application for EIN number)
- Form I-9 needs to be filled out for each worker
- Form W-4 needs to be filled out for each worker's tax withholdings
- You will need to provide a form W-2 for each employee at the end of the year and will need to file the forms with your state and the Social Security Administration
- You will need to withhold federal and state income taxes
- You will need to make tax deposits for both state and federal employment taxes
- You will need to file state and federal quarterly tax reports
- You will need to apply for a state and federal unemployment tax account and file those forms quarterly and yearly
- You may need other forms as required by your state

## 2. Insurance

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

Make sure that 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 home is cleaned.

## 3. Home Walk-Through

It is important that you have a face-to-face interview 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 and asking questions?

It is important to walk through your home 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.

You'll also want to ask for references and check them out. Is this company reliable? How long have they been cleaning your home? Are you satisfied with the quality of service provided?

#### 4. Supplies and Equipment

Find out who is to provide cleaning supplies and equipment. Some states consider you to be the employer if you provide these items, which means you are responsible for medical expenses if a worker is injured using your cleaning chemicals or vacuum.

A professional cleaning company will provide their own supplies and equipment. Their employees will be properly trained on all cleaning chemicals used as well as vacuum cleaners and other equipment.

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.

#### 5. Questions You Should Ask

Before hiring a cleaning company, ask lots of questions. Here is a list of questions you should have the answers to before making a decision on which company to hire:

1. Do you have insurance such as liability insurance, bonding and workers compensation?
2. Do you have a cleaning specifications list that explains what will be performed at each service?
3. Tell me about your hiring procedures. Do you perform background checks?
4. Do you have an employee training manual? Can I see it?
5. Do you have a safety training manual?
6. Do you have a company policy manual?
7. Do you have references?
8. Do your employees wear uniforms?
9. How do you follow-up on their work?
10. How do you accept payment; credit card or check?
11. How do you determine your pricing?
12. Do you use a communications log? If not, how do I leave notes for the cleaners?

13. What is your policy and procedures for assigning keys and alarm codes?
14. What is your policy and procedures for answering complaints?
15. Do you have contracts or agreements?
16. What is your cancellation policy?
17. Do you perform specialized work such as carpet cleaning, tile and grout cleaning, or window cleaning?
18. Are you or your company certified in specialized work such as carpet cleaning or tile and grout cleaning?
19. Do you have a federal and state EIN number?
20. Do you subcontract any work that would be done in my home?
21. What cleaning chemicals do you use?
22. Do you use environmentally safe chemicals and equipment?
23. Do your employees carry MSDS sheets for each product that they will use in my home?
24. Will you send one person or a team to clean my home?

This guide should arm you with the information you need to make a wise choice when selecting a house cleaning service. Never take this decision lightly, as the safety of your family and property depend on your decision.