

Dear Maintenance Men:

We are getting bids for the driveway of an apartment house. Each contractor has his own opinion about the scope of work. It becomes confusing.

Anne

Dear Anne,

“Apples and Oranges” bids are very common and not unique to the asphalt trade. Every contractor has different materials and suppliers which they are not only familiar with, but experienced in the application. As with any profession, a diagnosis, procedure, product and cure may vary. This is why a second opinion is always encouraged or necessary. We too often consider the “three bid” rule as a tool to compare pricing and do not delve deeper into quality, workmanship, application or other specification which can dramatically increase or decrease the costs related to our repairs.

It is best to develop a scope of work, with drawings which identify in detail the following (this will ensure all other contractors are bidding on the same scope):

1. Areas to be covered, replaced, repaired (in square feet) and outlined in site plan.
2. Clearly identified type and quantity of asphalt mix, slurry and sealer. This is very important as most asphalt is recycled and diminishes in quality.
3. Which equipment will be used to address repairs and distribution of materials (compaction and heavy rolling equipment is key).
4. Communicate your long-term or short-term expectations.
5. Ask that the application warrants against “pooling” or “ponding”.
6. Look for proper compacted thickness according to load. (Example: 2.5” of laid asphalt and then compacted 2” by roller.)
7. Monitor all work being performed to ensure the contractor is adhering to the contracted specifications. (Ask that a supervisor is always onsite.)
8. Scrutinize the lowest bid very carefully.
9. Require all other industry standard practices, insurance, and contract language be in the agreement.
10. Visit www.cslb.ca.gov for additional tips on how to protect yourself.

Dear Maintenance Men:

I am having a dilemma: one of my downstairs units has a major plumbing problem. According to the plumber, the tub/shower drain beyond the trap is rotted and needs to be replaced. The plumber says the tub must be removed to complete the repairs. I'm afraid to approve the bid due to not only the cost and inconvenience to my resident, but my shower wall tile is in perfect condition. What are some of the steps to make sure this “rotted” pipe is the issue before I give the plumber the OK?

Joan

Dear Joan:

Most likely the tub may be compromised as well as the drain pipe. Most tubs have access behind them for pipe repair. You may want to get a second opinion as this is a major job. The shower tile is most times the “ouch” factor in a tub replacement. It is hard to see perfectly good tile go to waste. As a matter of fact, removing a tub is always a big job and we don't blame you for being hesitant.

We recommend doing a roter service first. If the pipe is rotted or broken, evidence of mud or other debris might stick to the snake. Next, using a camera snake, you might be able to see the break and confirm the plumber's diagnosis. The snake and camera will give you a good idea of the direction, distance and location of the break. This will come in handy when it comes time to make holes in your concrete. (The less holes, the better!)

Some “telltale” signs your line is broken, corroded or worn through from the bottom:

1. The tip and cable of the “snake” roter line is clogged with mud (black sludge is normal in older lines).
2. The roter cable cannot break loose the clog.
(The cable tip may have found the hole in the pipe and is busy digging a tunnel in the dirt.)
3. The clog returns time and time again.
4. Waste water is found at the interior or exterior of the unit.

With regard to your shower wall tile, simply cut the first two tile courses above the tub. You can break the tile along a natural grout line or use a ceramic tile saw to cut through the tile. After the tub is removed and reinstalled, replace any of the drywall behind the tile with “HardieBacker” cement board material and install the missing tile and grout to match.

Feel free to contact Buffalo Maintenance, Inc., at 714-956- 8371, for maintenance work or consultation; or JLE Property Management, Inc., at 714-778-0480 for management service or consultation. Jerry L'Ecuyer is a licensed contractor and real estate broker. Jerry has been involved with apartments as a professional since 1988. Frankie Alvarez is the Operations Director of Buffalo Maintenance, Inc., and can be reached at 714-956-8371 or Frankie@BuffaloMaintenance.com. Websites: www.BuffaloMaintenance.com and www.ContactJLE.com and [www.Facebook.com/BuffaloMaintenance](https://www.facebook.com/BuffaloMaintenance).