



The Castle Hills **Reporter**

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



As you read this, you may be preparing for Spring Break or perhaps just some Spring cleaning; meanwhile, the City of Castle Hills is moving ahead! The Parks and Ad HOC Projects Committee has been working to develop capital improvement projects for The Commons. If you are not familiar with The Commons, it is the park area between City Hall and the Fire Department/Public Works. The Commons is host to many City events and community gatherings. While the committee has been working without spending any money, eventually we will get to a point where the concepts and ideas will either be funded or shelved. I fully realize that the majority of citizens are concerned with streets and/or drainage, and “quality of life” investments—YOU have spoken and I have listened.

In conversations with Ad HOC Projects Committee Chairman John Squire and Parks Commission Chairman Bernard Juettemeyer, we realize the need to raise \$30,000 for quality of life investments in The Commons. What does this mean exactly? This means that we will not take funds earmarked for street and drainage improvements to fund The Commons. As your Mayor, I am going to reach out to my network and friends of Castle Hills to bring in people to invest in the future of our City. We have infrastructure needs outlined in the City’s Capital Improvements Plan, but we need to invest in other aspects of our city as well. As Mayor it is my goal to make this happen.

On the topic of streets and drainage, if you have not already heard, the City Council approved the Watershed III - Phase 1 Drainage Project (Banyan/Glentower). This is a momentous occasion, as the stormwater on Banyan has been an issue for some time. The City Manager and I are encompassing a variety of approaches to find a comprehensive solution to address the overall flooding around Banyan and the adjoining streets. As we move forward, we will keep you informed about what is going on in your area.

One of the new actions of the city is to provide a project board for our long-term capital improvement projects. This project board was successful in ensuring communication on the Antler Drive project. It is understandable that residents will have comments, questions, and concerns when they see work being performed. This project board will let you know what is being done, the entire scope of the work, and the expected completion

(Continued on page 3)

“The statements and facts contained in newsletter articles from the Mayor and City Council Members are their own personal views and should not be considered official city sponsored statements or facts and should not be relied upon as such.”

CITY COUNCIL

JR Trevino
Mayor

Joe Izbrand
Mayor Pro-Tem, Place 1

Mark F. Sanderson
Place 2

Kurt May
Place 3

Lesley Wenger,
Place 4

Douglas Gregory
Place 5

CITY STAFF

Ryan Rapelye
City Manager, (210) 293-9673

Vacant
City Secretary, (210) 293-9681

Lara Feagins
Finance, (210) 293-9674

James “Jim” Ladewig
Fire Department Chief
(210) 342-2341, ext. 217

Johnny Siemens
Police Department Chief
(210) 342-2341

Rick Harada
Public Works & Animal Control
Department Director
(210) 293-9676

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& POLICE CALL 911**

Non-emergency (210) 342-2341

Monthly Meetings

All meetings are held at
City Hall unless otherwise posted.

City Council

2nd Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Architectural Review Committee

1st Wednesday, 7:00pm
Upon Request

Board of Adjustment
4th Monday, 5:30 p.m.
Upon Request

Zoning Commission
1st Tuesday, 7:00pm
Upon Request

**Crime Control & Prevention
District**
3rd Monday, 5:30pm
Quarterly or as needed

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(Continued from page 2)

date. It is important to me to see the completion of this work during the tenure of the current board. The contractors who are performing the infrastructure work know that we are counting the days until this project is completed.

In an effort to keep you informed, on March 5th we hosted an information session for the work which will begin on March 16 in the Banyan area. This meeting served as an opportunity for stakeholders to get up to speed and ask questions about the project. While I am writing this article in advance of the meeting, I am certain this will be a great way for everyone to learn more about exactly what the project entails.

Below you will see a graphic depiction of the work to be done. The engineers had proposed an “extra” alternative addition, which I saw a potential issue with; however, after discussing the issue at length during the February Council meeting, City Council voted against that alternate. The alternate that Council voted against is the area in the red square below. We know the Banyan/Glentower project will not completely alleviate all flooding in the area. Additional drainage work will be necessary in the near future to extend the new drainage system down Carolwood to Banyan and on to Gardenview.

In an effort to mitigate unnecessary expenditures, Council felt that installing concrete in the “red square” area would be an unwise expenditure of city funds, since the concrete would have to be torn out prior to the new extension. In the interim, the City Manager is working with the City’s on-demand engineer on an alternate option to improve the roadway surface for this area.



I look forward to breaking ground for this project in the Spring as we continue to move our City forward. As always, if I can be of assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in service,

JR Trevino

Mayor

JTrevino@CastleHills-TX.gov

210-559-5940



MESSAGE FROM

THE CITY MANAGER

By Ryan D. Rapelye, City Manager

Raising the Bar!

My first Reporter article for the City of Castle Hills was done in May 2018 just a few months after becoming City Manager. In the May 2018 article, after a couple months of observation and evaluation of the current organization I had identified a few things the City needed which included the need to assemble a leadership team, formulate a strategic plan, and develop a multi-year plan to address street and drainage infrastructure for the City.

As I reflect on that May 2018 article and develop this current one, I am enthusiastic about the direction of the City of Castle Hills. Over the last two years, City Council adopted the City’s Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to start tackling street and drainage needs around the City. Another highlight is the adoption of the City’s overall strategic plan, and enhanced transparency in the City’s adopted annual budgets which detail and define where funds are being spent and why. We have also been able to complete a number of other projects throughout the City.

Also, in the May 2018 Reporter, I indicated City employees would continue to work diligently every day with a number of organizational values aimed at providing excellent customer service, treating others with respect and acting with integrity. As City Manager, my goal was and still is to continue to promote excellent customer service and team work throughout the organization.

This principle has not wavered, as all of our employees are dedicated to continuing to deliver a high standard of customer service. Over the last two years, City staff has been

(Continued on page 4)

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(Continued from page 3)

resilient and dedicated despite situational changes impacting the City. Through it all, our employees continued to do their job with the upmost professionalism and ensured that City services were met. The leaders in our organization, our Department Directors, were instrumental in moving our City forward in difficult and challenging times.

How a culture functions and effective teamwork are two vital elements in an organization's foundation. Our employees each have different talents, skills and knowledge, and I believe that over the last two years, they have developed a culture of values, trust, and ethics that instills a teamwork approach to accomplish day-to-day services designed to benefit the citizens they serve.

Another area our employees have excelled in is the ability to wear different hats. Small cities have the disadvantage of being only one deep in the organizational chart. Under this scenario, employees are required to cross-train, develop competencies in multiple skills sets, and remain current on projects and practices in multiple areas of city government. This is why it is important to provide the resources, tools, and training to our employees.

Many municipalities experience turnover, but probably not to the extent that the City of Castle Hills has during the

past year. Three key positions were vacant this past year: Fire Chief, City Secretary, and Finance Director. While these positions were vacant, other employees stepped forward to ensure that services were maintained and that the city continued to move forward. This past year, we filled the Fire Chief and Finance Director positions with very competent people. I am in the process of hiring a City Secretary, but in the meantime, I have hired an interim City Secretary who has done an amazing job to raise the bar and work to update city records and ensure timely compliance on matters.

In many facets of the organization, staff continues to look for ways to improve how city services are delivered; this is what I mean by "Raising the Bar". "Raising the Bar" is a metaphor to convey the idea of gradually "Setting the Bar" to a higher standard in order to maintain and improve upon the objectives and accomplishments of an organization.

As we progress, we have completed a multi-million-dollar street reconstruction project to improve our infrastructure along Antler Drive. We are now beginning another project to address drainage and street reconstruction in an area of the City which has required attention for many years, Banyan and Glentower. This project is the first step in addressing the drainage in this area and eventually throughout Watershed III in our Master Drainage Study.

The City is also close to selecting a financial advisor who will guide the City in developing a financing plan in order to address our street and drainage needs in the future. The City's CIP-Streets identifies a large portion of our streets which require reconstruction, estimated at almost \$10 million. The City will need to focus on these particular streets before any type of routine street maintenance plan, such as overlay or sealcoating, can be applied. Once these streets have been reconstructed, the street maintenance portion should be the ultimate goal to preserve the foundation of the street for years to come. We are hoping to begin the streets maintenance plan for this year in late April or early May. In the FY 2020 Annual Budget, we allocated \$400,000 towards street maintenance in Castle Hills.

As City Manager, I am committed to the City of Castle Hills and will continue to work to enhance organizational structure, put further processes in place to move the City forward in a positive direction with a stable governance system. The City has effective planning to address streets and drainage, established goals for continual improvement and will evaluate best practices in other cities to ensure we "Raise the Bar".

Please contact me at rrapelye@castlehills-tx.gov or at the office at 210.293.9673 if you have any questions on projects or need assistance with services from the City of Castle Hills.

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COUNCIL COMMENTS



JOE IZBRAND
PLACE 1, Mayor Pro-Tem

Oftentimes, when I tell people I live in Castle Hills, they ask me why I chose to live here.

The answer is that question is easy: the wonderful people and beautiful homes, the vibrant neighborhoods and outstanding schools, the exceptional restaurants and shopping options, and the convenient access to all our highways and the airport.

Most of all, I tell people one of the greatest benefits of living in Castle Hills is our exceptional city services including police, fire, public works and city administration.

Consider this:

When you call the Castle Hills Police Department, the average response time of an officer is less than 3 minutes. That is 5 minutes faster than the national average. It is also nearly 2 minutes faster than our police response just 5 years ago.

Did you know that, on average, our fire department responds to 75-85 emergency calls a month? That is more than two calls every single day of the year. Many of those are medical emergencies and our highly trained first responders are just minutes away.

Every day, you see the city's public works crews passing through our neighborhoods, providing trash collection service to more than 1,500 households, handling weekly collection of brush and recycling, filling potholes in streets and providing animal control services. Rain or shine, hot or cold, our public works team is on the job.

At city hall, our administrative staff annually processes more than 1,000 residential and commercial permits, the municipal court handles 8,000 cases, nearly 1,000 passport applications are processed and our code compliance officer responds to more than 1,700 calls for service.

While we enjoy this high degree of service from the city staff, what most of us don't fully appreciate is that the number of city staff has remained fairly constant over the past decade, even as responsibilities have grown exponentially.

In 2009, there were a total of 65 city employees in Castle Hills. Today, there are 67 employees. What business do you know of that can take on more work every year, continue to respond promptly and efficiently to its customers, and consistently perform at the highest levels – all with virtually the same size staff?

Real estate agents tell me that we have turned a corner reputationally and Castle Hills is once again a high demand destination. More families are moving here because of our exceptional quality of life, and more businesses are opening here because of our welcoming

environment. Castle Hills is thriving and that is, in no small part, because of our city employees' commitment to service.

We have much to be proud of in Castle Hills.

I am tremendously honored to serve as your Place 1 Alderman. I invite you to stay in touch, and let me know how I can be of service to you. Connect with me at www.facebook.com/IzbrandPlace1. You can also share your thoughts, ideas and comments with me via email at IzbrandPlace1@gmail.com.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service to our community.



KURT MAY
PLACE 3

The monthly Councilman Office Hours, first Tuesday evening of the month, continue to draw residents interested in bringing ideas and issues before our Castle Hills City Council. In February we featured our local business, Pet Barn, and discussed everything from code compliance, to Zoning Commission recommendations, to citizens interested in options to connect to the utility sewer system from septic tanks. We also heard great suggestions for regular postings by the Reporter of holiday trash pickup schedules and an updated resident's booklet outlining key city codes, permitting requirements, and services offered by the city and local business. Thank you for your ideas and participation!

The next two Councilman Office Hours will be held Tuesday, March 3rd at Sawasdee Thai, 6407 Blanco Road, from 6:30 to 7:30pm, and Tuesday, April 7th at Don Juan Pollos Asados, 5525 Blanco Road, from 6:30 to 7:30pm. Come early, stay late, share ideas, and enjoy what our local businesses have to offer.

I anticipate continued focus by the City Council on Zoning Commission proposals regarding ordinance revisions. Continued input by citizens is appreciated. Remember to vote in our City election, May 2nd. Early voting is from April 20-28. Voting is the single most important act we can all do to help move Castle Hills forward. Vote!

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DOUGLAS GREGORY
PLACE 5

It has taken me three years of planning and pushing two different councils to finally have a major street reconstruction-drainage project under contract concerning Banyan and other nearby streets impacted by this huge multi-million-dollar project. This was long overdue and demonstrates how our city responded to the continual flooding of a large residential area.

For over twenty years San Antonio has allowed ever increasing amounts of stormwater to rush through our city, the consequences of which have been the destruction of our streets, increased risk of drownings and the severe draining of our resources to address a problem, generally not of our making.

Banyan is a major conduit for water that rushes over a border street with the City of San Antonio along Lock hill-Selma Road which flows down Carolwood as well as other arteries such as North Manton. Now, tremendous amounts of water flow through our streets and drain throughout our city. This project is intended to lessen the danger of flooding and loss of life as well as in depth reconstruction of necessary area of Banyan.

A seeming lack of action by San Antonio over this serious drainage/flooding problem, that they in large part have created, has brought us to this point. Over the years, I have repeatedly urged councils to address this situation with pleas to San Antonio (and to Bexar County) since the costs were prohibitive for our small city, our hands were tied. However, over the last several years I have been the chairman of the Digital Sign Committee. We have handed out a number of contracts placing digital signs on Loop 410. These contracts now generate close to \$400,000 thousand annually to our city, all of which are directed to street/drainage projects.

Whether or not these and other drainage problems (North Manton, Mimosa, Krameria) will be addressed is to be determined by how much heat other councilmembers feel from you the taxpayer. I am doing all I can to seek solutions for these problems but this and future councils must have the "fire in the belly" to commit the necessary resources to go forward.

Working together we cannot fail. Moving forward or endless talk, the choice is yours.

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Code Compliance

By Luis Zamarron,
Assistant to the City Manager/Code Enforcement

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The 2020 Census is around the corner! From March 12 to March 30, you will begin receiving official Census Bureau mail at your household with detailed information on how to respond to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail. The Census Bureau has provided the following timetable for the upcoming 2020 Decennial count:

- **March 12–20:** Initial invitations to respond online and by phone will be delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.
- **March 16–24:** Reminder letters will be delivered.
- **March 26–April 3:** Reminder postcards will be delivered to households that have not responded.
- **April 8–16:** Reminder letters and paper questionnaires will be delivered to households that have not responded.



You can find a sample of the paper questionnaire here:

<https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2019-08/2020-informational-questionnaire.pdf>

- **April 20–27:** Final reminder postcards will be delivered to households that have not yet responded.
- **May 13–July 31:** Households who have not responded to any of the invitations will be visited, in-person, by a census-takers. Please note that at this time, the U.S. Census Bureau does **NOT** have any employees "knocking and talking" to any household.

Any suspicious activity should be reported to the police department. Along the same topic, an often-overlooked population for Census purposes are children. Any of our audience who are educators might find helpful informational resources at the following web addresses:

- <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/sis/resources/2020/preschool-take-home-flyer.pdf>
- <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programssurveys/sis/resources/2020/sis-take-home-flyer-english.pdf>

On another topic, please report code compliance violations to me at 210-293-9678, izamarron@castlehills-tx.gov, or with the police department during off-business hours. Thanks for your time.



Many of you may have noticed and commented on the current state of our patrol unit fleet. Recently, the City took delivery of two 2020 Chevy Tahoe (Police Pursuit Vehicles, PPV's) fully upfitted and ready for duty....and just in time. Over the better part of 2019 the four 2016 Dodge Chargers have been pushed past their effective service limits (100k+ miles) and with warranties exhausted which are no longer cost effective to perform major repairs. As such, they have been decommissioned. Additionally, one of the Ford Interceptors was totaled in a tragic accident in June of 2019, which involved one good Samaritan killed, and forced two civilian and two of our officers to jump from the highway overpass above Honeysuckle (injuring all parties).

Over the last year (2019), CHPD has been waiting for the replacement Ford Interceptors that were ordered late in 2018. Missing the window to order the 2019 models, the City was placed in queue for the 2020 models. During the production of the 2020 editions, Ford manufactures discovered several issues with the produced units that had already been sent out to distribution centers for delivery to dealers. Some issues were minor while others, such as the parking brake engaging while operating the vehicle and seat belts discrepancies, were a major concern. Ford elected to cease production of the vehicles and correct the issues for all same model units which has impacted law enforcements programs around the country.

CHPD recently learned that our long-awaited Ford Explorer patrol units are on the way. Despite the issues surrounding our patrol fleet, the Castle Hills Police Department will continue to provide uninterrupted and unrivaled police services to the citizens of Castle Hills. We would like to thank all the citizens of the City of Castle Hills for their continued support.



As always, please report suspicious activity and stay current with your police department by following us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/castlehillspolicedepartment/>

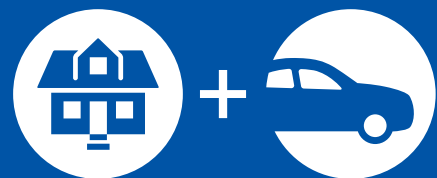


At the suggestion of Mayor Trevino, the Castle Hills Garden Club will sponsor a new program, **The Yard of the Month**. The goal of the program is to encourage a renewed interest in yard and landscape beautification throughout the city of Castle Hills. Each month from May through November, one yard from the north part of Castle Hills and one from the south part of the city will be selected to receive the recognition of Yard of the Month.

Residents are invited to send photos of their yard or of a neighbor's yard to the Facebook page for the Castle Hills Garden Club found within the Castle Hills News Events and Discussion site or you may submit an entry via email at: CastleHillsGardenClub@gmail.com

For more information about the Castle Hills Garden Club, please contact us through our Facebook page or email listed above.

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Castle Hills Fire Department

By Chief Jim Ladewig

SPRING FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Now that we are moving from winter into spring there are certain things that we should be aware of to make sure we stay safe during spring and summer activities. Naturally, we all should do maintenance and upkeep on those systems that keep us warm through the fall and winter months but we tend not to think of fire safety items during the warmer months. These are the things that we would like to remind everyone to keep mindful of as we switch from coats and pants to t-shirts and shorts.

Grilling is something we all look forward to when the temperatures start to rise. Family outings and backyard barbeques are abundant during this time of year and there are precautions that should be made to have a safe outing. NFPA reports that there is an average of 8,900 home fires per year with backyard barbeques being the main cause. When bringing the grill out of storage there are some areas that should be checked prior to use. For charcoal/ wood burning and gas grills, they should be checked for cleanliness and making sure no critters have used the grill for a home through the winter months. Make sure the grill is still structurally sound with no areas that have rusted causing a weak spot in the fire box. With gas grills it is important to make sure your tank is still usable and all valves and hoses are in good working condition and have no leaks. Make sure to always be aware of small children around the grills and to store all charcoal starter fluids and matches/ lighters out of reach of the little ones. Never dispose of ash or coals into any combustible container or place near any building. Even two-three days after the barbeque, coals buried in the ash could still be giving off enough heat to ignite paper or a plastic trash can. The grill should be set up in an open outdoor area with no combustible materials or vegetation above or next to the grill.

Lastly, as we proceed through the summer months be sure to keep the grill clean after every use. Grease and residue build up in your grill is a cause of 20% of all grill related structure fires. Fire pits, though not really considered a grill should also be treated with the same degree of caution and maintenance as discussed for grills with a few additions. Avoid using the pit to burn leaves and trash. These items are easily blown about by a slight breeze causing a fire to spread to adjacent buildings. It is also a good idea to have a bucket of water on hand to assist in extinguishing a fire.

As we begin our spring cleaning, we should add our dryer vents and chimneys to the list. Having a clogged dryer vent or failing to clean out the lint trap is the leading cause of all dryer related fires. NFPA recommends we should have the dryer vent pipe cleaned and inspected at least once a year. Along those lines it

is also recommended to have your chimney inspected and cleaned at least once a year as well. Having this done in the spring will keep any additional damage being caused by the buildup during use in the winter and also a technician will be more available than during the Fall rush.

Finally, always remember to have an adequate number of operating smoke alarms in the appropriate locations in your home. It is a good idea to change the battery twice a year, spring and fall, to make sure that the unit always has a fresh and adequately charged battery. All smoke alarms have an expiration date. Most units are about 10 years, but each manufacturer can be different. Check your units manufactured date and manufacturers recommended replacement date to ensure you have a smoke detector that will operate properly. Testing your smoke alarm once a month is also highly recommended.

As always if you have any questions or concerns, please call the Castle Hills Fire Department, 210-342-2341 and we would be happy to help in any way possible.





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Spring Home Maintenance Checklist

Now is a great time to prepare your home for Spring. Here are a few general home maintenance tips to consider this time of year:

- Clean the kitchen exhaust hood and filter.
- Replace the furnace. It may be especially filthy after the winter months.
- Inspect the roof for water damage. It's also a good idea to check any fences, carports and sheds. **Tip:** Check the south end of your roof first; it is the first to show wear.
- Test the batteries in all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Clear the gutters of any buildup to allow for proper functioning.
- Start the grass revival cycle by aerating, thatching and fertilizing.
- Be sure no inside or outside vents are blocked by fallen debris.
- Clean the windows and screens. Repair any holes in screens or replace them if needed.
- Inspect and repair siding and peeling paint. Fix or replace damaged siding. Strip peeling paint and replace it with a new coat.



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The City of Castle Hills is accepting paperwork for U.S. passport applications at city hall. The passport application services are available on a walk-in basis:

- Monday: 8:30 am to 2 pm;
- Wednesday: 8:30 am to 4 pm;
- Friday: 10 am to 2 pm

Appointments are available for Saturdays from
8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

To schedule an appointment call (210) 293-9675 or
(210) 342-2341.

For more information regarding how to apply for or
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State website at:

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Better Business Bureau REPORT

Keep Your Cool: Trustworthy AC Repair Tips

By Jason Meza

Regional Director - San Antonio

Slowly but surely, that famous Texas heat is returning and will be back in triple digits. It's important to be prepared in case you begin experiencing problems with your air conditioning unit or just need a preventative maintenance check.

According to energy.gov, furnaces and air conditioners need their filters cleaned and changed every couple of months. A dirty filter can also increase energy costs and damage equipment. Maintaining your home's heating and cooling systems can improve the overall air quality of your home, cut energy costs and help alleviate allergies.

If your AC needs a bit of work or isn't cooling properly, annual spring maintenance can help improve efficiency and prolong the life of your unit. In 2019, Better Business Bureau (BBB) received 2,800+ complaints regarding HVAC contractors nationwide. These complaints can range up to \$1,500 in financial loss and common issues deal with billing, the quality of workmanship or lack of proper permits.

As a homeowner, you should also always be on the lookout for red flags of unreliable businesses. BBB warns against these signs for untrustworthy AC Contractors or any other home improvement services:

- **Start with research.** Visit bbb.org to see a business's profile and check their complaint history and customer reviews. BBB Request-A-Quote is a tool allowing you to get fast quotes from accredited businesses. Ask for referrals from trusted people.
- **Verify licenses.** Often, low rated businesses in this industry don't have the proper licenses to do repair or installation work. Verify with Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR.texas.gov/LicenseSearch) that they have updated licenses matching the business name.
- **Avoid high pressure tactics.** Typically, they might try this by offering you a great deal and saying its only good right then. In most cases, if a deal is good one day, it will be good the next. Be especially careful with door-to-door solicitors who might not be working with legitimate businesses.
- **Get everything in writing.** Another common complaint is warranty issues. Getting everything in writing can help your case if you find yourself in this situation. Get up to 3 estimates and make payment using reliable methods such as check or credit card.
- **Asks for a large upfront payment.** A typical payment schedule should follow the "Rule of Thirds." The first payment is given when signing the contract and helps pay for materials, the second payment when work begins, and the final payment when the job is finished, and you are satisfied with the quality of work.

To find a trustworthy AC Repair company, file a complaint or leave a positive review, visit bbb.org.

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