



INSTRUCTIONS — NOT PART OF THE AGREEMENT

This template helps Iowa homeowners understand what a strong contractor agreement looks like. It is an educational starting point provided by jaspector.com — not a finished contract, and not legal advice. Iowa contractor registration law and consumer protection rules impose specific requirements, and local jurisdictions may add further obligations. Have this document reviewed by an Iowa-licensed attorney before use. Use of this template does not create an attorney-client relationship, and jaspector.com assumes no liability for any outcomes arising from its use.

How to Use This Template

1. **Verify the contractor's registration.** Use the Iowa DIAL contractor registration search at dial.iowa.gov/licenses/building/contractors to confirm the registration is current and that the legal business name matches the contract exactly.
2. **Download and print this document.** Fill in every blank field before signing. Do not leave any section empty or sign a contract with blank spaces.
3. **Read the Iowa Legal Notes below.** They explain state-specific protections, the disaster repair notice requirement, and lien registry rules that apply to your project.
4. **Both parties sign.** You and the contractor each receive a signed copy before any work starts.
5. **Consult an attorney.** For large projects or complex scopes, have an Iowa-licensed attorney review the agreement before you sign.

Field-by-Field Guide

Section 1 — Parties

Fill in legal names exactly as they appear on official documents. Enter the contractor's Iowa DIAL registration number. Match the business name on this contract to the name in DIAL exactly — this is critical if a dispute develops later.

Section 2 — Scope of Work

Be as specific as possible. "Roof replacement" is not enough — list materials (shingle type, brand, weight), dimensions, underlayment, and what is explicitly excluded. Vague scopes are the leading cause of contractor disputes in Iowa.

Section 3 — Payment Schedule

Iowa has no statutory cap on down payment amounts for residential home improvement contracts. However, the Iowa Attorney General advises homeowners to limit upfront payments to what is needed for mobilization and nonreturnable materials. Tie every payment to a completed, verifiable work milestone — not a calendar date. Never pay the full amount in advance.

Section 4 — Timeline

Get start and completion dates in writing. Fill in the delay penalty fields — these protect you if the contractor falls behind without justification.

Section 7 — Warranties

Fill in the warranty period. One year is common; negotiate for longer on major work. Ensure manufacturer warranties are passed through to you in writing.

Section 9.3 — Three-Business-Day Cancellation Right

If the contractor came to your home to solicit or sign this contract, Iowa Code Chapter 555A gives you the right to cancel within three business days without penalty. The contractor must explain this right to you orally and in writing at the time of signing. To cancel: deliver or mail written notice to the contractor's address before midnight of the third business day.

Section 12.2 — Disaster / Catastrophe Repair Notice

If your project involves repairing damage from a storm, flood, fire, or other catastrophe, Iowa Code §103A.71 requires the contractor to provide a specific written notice (included in Section 12.2) about your rights regarding insurance deductibles and claim negotiation. This notice must be signed or initialed before or at the time of contracting. If your contractor is offering to rebate your insurance deductible or handle your insurance claim, this is illegal in Iowa — report it to the Iowa Insurance Division at iid.iowa.gov.

Section 11 — Mechanics' Lien

Iowa mechanics' liens are filed with the Iowa Secretary of State via the Mechanics' Notice and Lien Registry (MNLRL) — not at the county recorder. Contractors have 90 days from last furnishing labor or materials to file. Your contractor must post a Notice of Commencement to the MNLRL within 10 days of project start. Request lien waivers with every payment.

Section 14 — Exhibits

Attach all plans, specs, the contractor's DIAL registration printout, certificates of insurance, and the disaster/catastrophe notice if applicable. Check each box for what you are including.

Iowa Legal Notes

Note 1 — Registration vs. Licensing (Sections 1, 8, 12)

Iowa uses a *registration* system for general contractors under Iowa Code Chapter 91C, not a comprehensive licensing system. Registration confirms compliance with workers' compensation and unemployment insurance laws. It does not certify skill or quality. For electrical, plumbing, and HVAC work, separate trade licenses are required under Iowa Code Chapters 103 and 105. Always verify specialty trade credentials separately from general registration.

Note 2 — No Statutory Deposit Cap (Section 3.2)

Unlike California, Iowa does not impose a statutory dollar cap on contractor down payments for residential home improvement contracts. The Iowa Attorney General recommends keeping upfront payments low and tied to actual work. As a practical benchmark, a down payment of 10–20% of the contract price is common; anything exceeding 30–33% upfront should be scrutinized carefully.

Note 3 — Mechanics' Lien Registry (Section 11)

Iowa uses a centralized online registry — the Mechanics' Notice and Lien Registry (MNLIR) at the Iowa Secretary of State's website — for all lien-related notices. This is different from most states, which use county recorder filings. The Notice of Commencement (10-day deadline), subcontractor Preliminary Notices (30-day deadline), and lien statements (90-day deadline) all flow through this system.

Note 4 — Storm-Chaser Contractors (Section 12.3)

Iowa sees significant activity from out-of-state contractors following severe weather events. Key red flags: contractor solicits at your door shortly after a storm, offers to "handle" your insurance claim, promises to cover your deductible, or cannot provide an Iowa DIAL registration number. Out-of-state contractors must post a \$25,000 bond with DIAL in addition to registering.

Note 5 — Small Claims Limit (Section 10.3)

Iowa small claims court handles disputes up to **\$6,500** (Iowa Code Chapter 631). For disputes above that threshold, the matter proceeds in Iowa District Court. Each party may represent themselves in small claims court, making it a cost-effective option for smaller contractor disputes.

Note 6 — Attorney General Complaint

The Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates contractor fraud, unlicensed work, and consumer protection violations. File at iowaattorneygeneral.gov or call 1-888-777-4590. Filing a complaint does not prevent you from pursuing other legal remedies.

About Jaspector

jaspector.com is an AI-powered property advisory service that helps homeowners navigate construction projects, verify contractors, and resolve disputes. If a dispute arises during your project, we can help you

document the issue and build a resolution strategy.

Learn more at jaspector.com — or email hi@jaspector.com to get started.

The instructions and notes above are provided by jaspector.com as an educational resource. They are not part of the agreement, do not constitute legal advice, and do not create an attorney-client or endorsement relationship. Template Version 1.0 — March 21, 2026.

IOWA HOMEOWNER-CONTRACTOR AGREEMENT

This agreement is entered into by the Homeowner and Contractor identified in Section 1 below.

Section 1 — Parties

Homeowner (Property Owner)

Name(s) _____

Property Address _____

Mailing Address (if different) _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Contractor

Business Name (Legal Entity) _____

Iowa DIAL Registration # _____

Trade / Specialty (if applicable) _____

Principal Contact Name _____

Business Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Workers' Compensation Policy # _____

General Liability Policy # _____

Section 2 — Scope of Work

2.1 Project Description

2.2 Work NOT Included

2.3 Permits and Inspections

- Contractor is responsible for obtaining all required building permits
- Contractor is responsible for scheduling all required inspections
- Permit costs are: Included in contract price / Billed separately at cost (circle one)

2.4 Plans and Specifications

- Attached as Exhibit A (architectural / engineering plans)
- Attached as Exhibit B (material specifications)
- No formal plans — scope defined by Section 2.1 above

Section 3 — Contract Price and Payment Schedule

3.1 Total Contract Price

Total Contract Price	\$ _____
Sales Tax (if applicable)	\$ _____
Permit Fees (if billed separately)	\$ _____
Total Amount Due	\$ _____

3.2 Payment Schedule

Payment	Amount	Trigger (Work Milestone)
Down Payment	\$ _____	Upon signing
Progress Payment 1	\$ _____	_____
Progress Payment 2	\$ _____	_____
Progress Payment 3	\$ _____	_____

Payment	Amount	Trigger (Work Milestone)
Final Payment	\$ _____	Completion and final inspection
Total	\$ _____	

3.3 Payment Terms

- Payments are due within _____ days of written invoice
- Acceptable payment methods: _____
- No payment shall be due for work not yet performed or materials not yet delivered to the job site
- Final payment is due only after: (a) all work is complete, (b) final inspection is passed (if applicable), and (c) Homeowner has had reasonable opportunity to inspect

Section 4 — Project Timeline

Estimated Start Date _____

Estimated Completion Date _____

4.1 Delays

- Contractor shall notify Homeowner in writing within 48 hours of any event that may delay the project
- Excusable delays include: weather, permit delays, material shortages, acts of God, government orders
- Non-excusable delays exceeding _____ business days entitle Homeowner to a daily credit of \$ _____ (liquidated damages), not to exceed _____% of the total contract price
- If the project is not substantially complete within _____ days of the estimated completion date (excluding excusable delays), Homeowner may terminate this contract under Section 9

Section 5 — Change Orders

Any changes to the scope, price, or timeline of this contract must be documented in a written Change Order signed by both parties before the changed work begins.

Each Change Order shall include: (1) description of the changed work; (2) addition to or deduction from the contract price; (3) impact on the project timeline; (4) signature of both Homeowner and Contractor.

No verbal agreements will modify this contract.

Section 6 — Materials and Workmanship

6.1 Materials

- All materials shall be new unless otherwise specified in writing
- Specific materials, brands, and grades are listed in: Section 2.1 / Exhibit B (circle applicable)
- Substitutions require prior written approval from Homeowner
- Contractor warrants that all materials comply with applicable building codes

6.2 Workmanship Standards

- All work shall be performed in a professional, workmanlike manner
- All work shall comply with applicable Iowa building codes and local ordinances
- All work shall conform to the plans, specifications, and scope described in this contract
- Contractor shall maintain a clean and safe job site

6.3 Subcontractors

- Contractor will / will not use subcontractors (circle one)
- If subcontractors are used, Contractor remains fully responsible for their work, licensing, and insurance
- All subcontractors performing work that requires a trade license (electrical, plumbing, HVAC) must hold a valid, active Iowa license
- Homeowner may request registration and license numbers for any subcontractor working on the project

Section 7 — Warranties

7.1 Contractor Warranty

Contractor warrants all labor and workmanship for a period of _____ year(s) from the date of completion. During this period, Contractor shall repair or correct, at Contractor's expense, any defects in workmanship or materials furnished by Contractor.

7.2 Manufacturer Warranties

Contractor shall provide Homeowner with all manufacturer warranties for materials and equipment installed. Contractor shall ensure installations comply with manufacturer specifications to preserve warranty coverage.

7.3 Warranty Exclusions

This warranty does not cover: normal wear and tear; damage caused by Homeowner negligence or misuse; damage caused by third parties or acts of God; items specifically excluded in writing.

Section 8 — Insurance and Bonding

8.1 Contractor Insurance Requirements

Contractor shall maintain, at minimum, the following coverage for the duration of the project:

Coverage	Minimum Amount
General Liability	\$ _____
Workers' Compensation	Statutory limits (required if Contractor has employees)
Automobile Liability (if applicable)	\$ _____

- Contractor shall provide certificates of insurance upon request
- Homeowner shall be named as additional insured on the general liability policy

8.2 Iowa DIAL Registration and Bond

Under Iowa Code Chapter 91C, contractors performing construction work earning \$2,000 or more annually must be registered with DIAL. Out-of-state contractors must also file a \$25,000 surety bond with DIAL. Contractor represents that registration is current and all required bonds are in force.

Section 9 — Termination

9.1 Homeowner's Right to Terminate

Homeowner may terminate this contract at any time by providing written notice to Contractor. Upon termination: Homeowner shall pay for all work satisfactorily completed and materials delivered to the job site as of the termination date; Contractor shall provide an itemized accounting within 10 business days; Contractor shall not charge a cancellation penalty exceeding actual costs reasonably incurred.

9.2 Contractor's Right to Terminate

Contractor may terminate this contract if: (a) Homeowner fails to make a payment due under this contract within _____ days of written notice of default; or (b) conditions at the job site make the work unsafe or illegal to continue.

9.3 Three-Business-Day Right to Cancel

If this contract was solicited and signed at the Homeowner's residence, or at a location other than the Contractor's regular place of business, for goods or services with a purchase price above \$25, the Homeowner has the right to cancel this contract within **three (3) business days** of signing without penalty, pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 555A. To cancel, deliver or mail written notice to the Contractor's address in Section 1 before midnight of the third business day. Contractor must provide oral and written notice of this right at the time of signing.

Section 10 — Dispute Resolution

10.1 Informal Resolution

The parties agree to attempt informal resolution of any dispute by written notice describing the issue. The other party shall respond in writing within 15 business days.

10.2 Mediation

If informal resolution fails, the parties agree to submit the dispute to non-binding mediation before a mutually agreed mediator. Mediation costs shall be shared equally.

10.3 Legal Action

If mediation fails, either party may pursue legal action in the Iowa district court for the county where the property is located. For disputes of \$6,500 or less, the Small Claims Division of Iowa District Court provides a simplified process (Iowa Code Chapter 631). The prevailing party shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees and costs where permitted by applicable Iowa law.

Section 11 — Mechanics' Lien Notice

Iowa Code Chapter 572 allows contractors, subcontractors, and material suppliers to place a mechanics' lien on your property if they are not paid. Liens are filed with the Iowa Secretary of State via the Mechanics' Notice and Lien Registry (MNLN).

11.1 Notice of Commencement

Under Iowa Code §572.13A, the general contractor must post a Notice of Commencement to the MNLN no later than **10 days** after work commences. Homeowner shall request a copy of the posted Notice of Commencement from Contractor.

11.2 Preliminary Notice by Subcontractors

Under Iowa Code §572.13B, subcontractors on residential projects must post a Preliminary Notice to the MNLN within **30 days** of first furnishing labor or materials. Receiving a Preliminary Notice does not indicate a problem — it preserves the sender's right to file a lien if unpaid. Keep all notices on file.

11.3 Lien Filing Deadline

Contractors and subcontractors have **90 days** from the date of last furnishing labor or materials to file a lien statement with the MNLN. Homeowner shall request lien waivers from Contractor and all known subcontractors with each progress payment and a final lien waiver before making the final payment.

Section 12 — Iowa-Specific Requirements

12.1 Iowa Contractor Registration Compliance (Iowa Code Chapter 91C)

Contractor is registered with Iowa DIAL if earning \$2,000 or more annually from construction work

- Registered business name matches the name on this contract and all payment instruments
- Out-of-state contractors have filed the required \$25,000 surety bond with DIAL

12.2 Disaster / Catastrophe Repair Notice (Iowa Code §103A.71)

If this contract is for repair of damage resulting from a naturally occurring catastrophe (fire, earthquake, tornado, windstorm, flood, or hailstorm), the following notice is required by Iowa law in at least 10-point bold type:

Pursuant to Iowa law your contract with _____ to provide goods and services to repair damage resulting from a naturally occurring catastrophe including but not limited to a fire, earthquake, tornado, windstorm, flood, or hail storm is void and you have no responsibility for payment under the contract if the above-named contractor either advertises or promises to rebate all or any portion of your insurance deductible, or represents or negotiates, or offers to represent or negotiate, on your behalf with your property and casualty insurance company on any insurance claim relating to the damage you have contracted to have repaired.

You may be responsible for payment to the above-named contractor for the cost of all goods and services provided whether or not you receive payment from any property and casualty insurance policy with respect to the damage.

Your signature below acknowledges your understanding of these legal obligations and rights.

Homeowner initials (if applicable): _____

12.3 Insurance Claim Work — Contractor Limitations

Iowa law prohibits contractors from acting as unlicensed public adjusters. A contractor may not negotiate with your insurance company on your behalf unless they hold a valid Iowa public adjuster license. If a contractor offers to cover your deductible or “handle your insurance claim,” that is a violation of Iowa law. Report such conduct to the Iowa Insurance Division at iid.iowa.gov.

12.4 Specialty Trade Licensing

- Electrical work: licensed electrician required (Iowa Code Chapter 103)
- Plumbing: licensed plumber required (Iowa Code Chapter 105)
- HVAC/Mechanical: licensed mechanic required (Iowa Code Chapter 105)
- Other specialty: _____

Section 13 — General Provisions

13.1 Entire Agreement

This contract, including all exhibits and change orders, constitutes the entire agreement between the parties. No prior verbal or written representations shall be binding unless incorporated herein.

13.2 Severability

If any provision of this contract is found unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

13.3 Governing Law

This contract shall be governed by the laws of the State of Iowa.

13.4 Notice

All notices under this contract shall be in writing and delivered to the addresses listed in Section 1, by personal delivery, certified mail, or email with confirmed receipt.

13.5 Assignment

Neither party may assign this contract without the prior written consent of the other party.

Section 14 — Exhibits and Attachments

- Exhibit A: Plans and Drawings
- Exhibit B: Material Specifications
- Exhibit C: Notice of Three-Business-Day Right to Cancel (if applicable)
- Exhibit D: Contractor's Iowa DIAL Registration Printout
- Exhibit E: Certificates of Insurance
- Exhibit F: Disaster / Catastrophe Repair Notice — §103A.71 (if applicable)
- Additional: _____

Signatures

By signing below, both parties acknowledge that they have read, understand, and agree to all terms of this contract.

Homeowner

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Homeowner (if jointly owned)

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Contractor

Signature

Printed Name

Title

Iowa DIAL Registration #

Date

Iowa Homeowner Pre-Signing Checklist

Before signing, confirm each item below.

- Verified contractor's Iowa DIAL registration is current at dial.iowa.gov/licenses/building/contractors
- Legal business name on contract matches the DIAL registered name exactly
- Out-of-state contractor: confirmed \$25,000 surety bond filed with DIAL
- Workers' compensation insurance confirmed (if contractor has employees)
- Specialty trade license numbers obtained for electrical, plumbing, or HVAC work
- Down payment is reasonable — tied to mobilization costs and nonreturnable materials only
- Payment schedule tied to work milestones, not calendar dates
- Three-business-day right to cancel notice provided (if contract solicited at home)
- Disaster/catastrophe repair notice provided and initialed (if applicable — §103A.71)
- Contractor has not offered to rebate insurance deductible or negotiate insurance claim
- All blank fields in this contract are filled in — no blank spaces
- Received a signed copy of the complete contract before work starts
- Plans, specs, and material lists are attached or described in detail
- Requested that contractor post Notice of Commencement to MNLIR within 10 days of project start