

Warning for fire survivors about bogus contractors

In response to the Washoe Drive Fire that destroyed dozens of homes and caused damage to many more, the Nevada State Contractors Board is warning affected homeowners to be cautious of unlicensed contractors who will likely begin frequenting neighborhoods soliciting repair/rebuild work.

Any person who comes into contact with an unlicensed contractor is encouraged to obtain as much information on the individual as possible and contact the Reno Unlicensed Contractor Hotline at (775) 850.7838.

Common red flags:

- Door-to-Door Solicitations – Contractors may come to the door immediately surveying damage and selling their services on-the-spot at a reduced price.
- Verbal Agreements – Contractors may say that a written contract is unnecessary.
- High Pressure Sales – Contractors may push for an immediate decision about work and does not allow the homeowner time to verify their contractor's license, obtain multiple bids, or check contractor references.
- Demands for Cash Payment – Contractors may insist on cash payments, even offering to drive/follow the homeowner to the bank to obtain the funds.
- Demands for Large Down Payment – Contractors may say that they need the majority of the funds to purchase supplies and pay workers prior to any work being performed. As a general rule of thumb, it is best not to pay more than 10 percent down and not let payments get ahead of the work.

Tips for hiring licensed contractors:

1. Ask for the contractor's license number and verify it on NSCB's website or call (775) 688.1141.
2. Obtain at least three bids prior to making your decision.
3. Ask for references from each contractor and follow up with them to verify the quality and timeliness of the work previously performed for those customers.
4. Make sure your contract is as detailed as possible, including type/color of materials, payment schedules, etc.
5. Never sign a contract until you understand all the terms and agreements.
6. Always obtain a receipt when payment is made. It is advised never to pay in cash – only check or credit card.
7. Request lien releases after each phase of the project is complete.
8. Don't let the payments get ahead of the work.
9. Report any suspicious activities to the Contractors Board at (775) 688.1141.

It is a criminal offense to contract without a license in Nevada. The first offense is a misdemeanor, second offense is a gross misdemeanor, and the third offense is a Class E felony.