



The Contractors State License Board, which operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates California's 285,000 contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States.

Disaster Debris Removal & Construction Scams

After natural disasters, unlicensed persons and transient criminals routinely pose as door-to-door home repair contractors and try to scam homeowners. The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) urges property owners to be cautious and make sure that anyone who offers to assist after a disaster is licensed.

The key is to avoid rushing into any agreement with contractors until you have verified their qualifications with CSLB and their work through recommendations from others who have previously contracted with them. A local business license is not the same as a CSLB license. Construction work that costs \$500 or more in combined labor and materials must be performed by a licensed contractor.

Classifications for Debris Removal

Minor debris removal and minor alteration to a structure in a post-disaster area (taking out minor portions of damaged walls or flooring, etc.) may be performed by a contractor with a C-61/D-64 Limited Specialty/Non-Specialized classification license.

A C-21 Building Moving/Demolition license or an "A" General Engineering license is authorized to remove debris and perform the minor and significant demolition necessary to remove parts of or an entire structure.

A "B" General Building license is authorized to perform debris removal and demolition only when their contracted work also includes the structural alterations that are necessary after water, fire, wind, or similar natural disasters.

Specialty contractors licensed in any of the "C" Specialty classifications can subcontract with a "B" contractor or perform construction work in their specialized building trade or craft.

In a disaster area, it's a good idea to check with your local building department for any additional permit requirements or guidelines.

Mold issues are regulated by local health services agencies.

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800.321.CSLB (2752)

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www.cslb.ca.gov

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CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

Consultants

Be sure that anyone who claims to be a “consultant” for insurance, demolition, or construction has a clean business record and is licensed. If any misunderstandings or disagreements occur with a consultant who is unlicensed, you have limited options to recover your money.

Any person who provides or oversees a bid for a construction project and/or arranges for and sets up work schedules for contractors and subcontractors, and/or maintains oversight of a construction project, is acting in the capacity of a contractor and must be licensed by CSLB ([Business and Professions Code section 7026.1](#)).

Keep in mind that when your local building department identifies a project as “owner-builder” on the permits, the homeowner is responsible for the safety of anyone on the construction site and the project, including paying employee wages and taxes and holding workers’ compensation insurance, even if a consultant is hired.

License Check

Use CSLB’s website (www.cslb.ca.gov/LicenseCheck) to research complaint history and workers’ compensation insurance status and to verify that a contractor’s license is in “good standing” (current and active). You can search by license number, business name, or employee name(s). Identical information is available by calling CSLB’s toll-free automated number: 800-321-CSLB (2752).

Build a List of Licensed Contractors in Your Area

You can start your search for a licensed contractor by using the “Find My Licensed Contractor” feature on the CSLB website (www.cslb.ca.gov/FindMyLicensedContractor). You can search for licensed contractors by classification within a specific geographic area based on either city or zip code. All search results, which link to current licensing information, are displayed in random order. Lists can be downloaded as either a PDF or spreadsheet for future reference.

Unlicensed Contractor Scams

Anyone who believes they have been scammed by someone claiming to be a contractor can notify one of CSLB’s Statewide Investigative Fraud Teams (SWIFT). Provide as much

descriptive information as possible, including photos and a vehicle license plate number, if available. In Northern California, call (916) 255-2924; Central California, call (559) 490-0580; and in Southern California, call (562) 345-7600.

Filing a Complaint

You can start the process of filing a complaint against a contractor on the CSLB website. You can also download the complaint form or order a copy using CSLB's toll-free automated number. You can also speak directly with a staff member Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. by calling CSLB's Disaster Hotline at 800-962-1125.