

# How to File a Complaint

You can file a complaint online at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), by mail (after downloading a complaint form) or by requesting a form through CSLB's automated telephone system at 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

Any way you file your complaint, you will need to send CSLB copies (not the original documents) of all relevant printed documentation (**no CDs or flash drives**). All pertinent information, such as all contracts (all pages, front and back), change orders, and cancelled checks (front and back), should be included and mailed to the appropriate office below. Photos also can be submitted. Failure to provide all documentation could result in a processing delay.

For complaints about work performed in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties, send complaint forms and documentation to:

Norwalk Intake and Mediation Center  
12501 East Imperial Highway, Suite 620  
Norwalk, CA 90650

For complaints about work performed in any California county not mentioned above, send complaint forms and documentation to:

Sacramento Intake and Mediation Center  
P.O. Box 269116  
Sacramento, CA 95826-9116

## CSLB Arbitration Programs

CSLB administers two arbitration programs: a mandatory program for disputes involving alleged damages of \$12,500 or less, and a voluntary program for disputes involving allegations of damage between \$12,500 and \$50,000.

Complaints must meet stringent criteria to qualify for referral to a CSLB arbitration program. CSLB staff will determine whether the dispute meets these criteria.

For more information about these programs, review CSLB's Mandatory Arbitration Program or Voluntary Arbitration Program guides. Both are available on the CSLB website at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), or by calling 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

## Information Disclosure

CSLB provides information about the status of a contractor's license, bond, and workers' compensation insurance, as well as pending and prior legal actions. This information is available at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or by calling the appropriate Legal Action Disclosure Unit listed below:

Northern California: (916) 255-4041

Southern California: (562) 345-7656



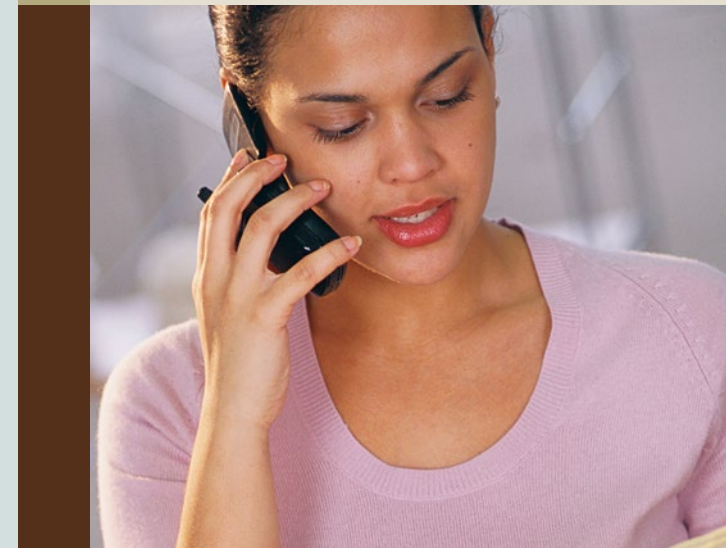
### CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

P.O. Box 26000  
Sacramento, CA 95826-0026  
800.321.CSLB (2752)  
[www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) • [CheckTheLicenseFirst.com](http://CheckTheLicenseFirst.com)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

A CONSUMER GUIDE  
TO FILING

# Construction Complaints



CONTRACTORS STATE  
LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs



## Unlicensed Activity

It is illegal to contract in California for jobs that are \$500 or more (combined labor and material costs) without a state contractor license. CSLB actively works against unlicensed activity and the illegal underground economy through undercover sting operations, sweeps of active construction sites, and assisting with prosecution undertaken by local jurisdictions.

Homeowners may have little recourse if dissatisfied with a project that was undertaken by an unlicensed contractor. CSLB can issue a warning, a citation, or refer the complaint to a local district attorney; however, it is ultimately up to the homeowner to seek restitution for damage or repair caused by an unlicensed contractor.

The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) protects consumers by licensing and regulating California contractors. Consumers or contractors who have an unresolved issue with a contractor can file a complaint with CSLB. CSLB aims to settle complaints through early intervention and mediation.

## Complaint Jurisdiction

Complaints within CSLB's jurisdiction involve alleged violations of California Contractors' State License Law by licensed or unlicensed contractors for up to four years from the date of a suspected illegal act.

The term "contractor" includes individuals or companies that offer services to improve real property including, but not limited to, home building, remodeling, room additions, swimming pools, painting, roofing, landscaping, plumbing, electrical, heating and air-conditioning, and the installation and repair of mobile homes.

CSLB provides help to consumers through mediation, arbitration, referral to other government agencies, or by providing information about other avenues for individual redress. These alternatives include small claims court and referring consumers with private arbitration clauses in their contracts to the arbitration process. CSLB will take legal action against a contractor, when appropriate, for violations of the applicable state laws and regulations.

## How Complaints are Handled

CSLB reviews every written complaint to determine if it falls within its jurisdiction. Complaints involving a threat to public health and safety, elder abuse, and cases where consumers have suffered a significant financial injury are given the highest priority. CSLB also prioritizes complaints based on the order of receipt, and available resources and staffing.

Once a complaint has been received, CSLB's Intake and Mediation Center representatives mail a written confirmation to the complainant. A notice also is sent to the contractor to encourage resolution without further CSLB intervention.

### ● Mediation

If the complaint is not resolved by the disputing parties, CSLB may ask for additional information and/or documentation. A consumer services representative (CSR) may call the parties and/or will make the arrangements if mediation is appropriate.

If mediation is unsuccessful, other options include referral to a CSLB arbitration program, assignment to a CSLB enforcement representative (ER) for investigation, or referral to alternative civil or dispute resolution methods.

Depending on the severity of the actions, the complaint may be closed with a warning letter to the contractor. A warning letter remains a matter of record and could support further action against the contractor if future violations occur.

### ● Investigation

If a CSR determines that the complaint requires further investigation, it will be assigned to an ER. The ER's investigation will determine if there is adequate evidence to support a finding of a violation of Contractors' State License Law. The investigation may include interviews with anyone involved in or who has information about the case.

### ● Disciplinary Action

Licensed contractors found guilty of violating the law can face suspension or loss of their license. Citations also may include civil penalties of up to \$5,000 and/or orders to make or compensate for repairs. (If disciplinary action is undertaken, the case is prosecuted on behalf of CSLB by the state Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General is not counsel for the complainant.)

### ● Small Claims Court

An investigation by CSLB does not guarantee restitution to complainants. If your primary interest is to gain restitution, you should pursue the matter in small claims court or consult an attorney. A brochure that explains how to file a claim in small claims court (for damages of \$10,000 or less) is available on the CSLB website, [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or by calling (800) 321-CSLB (2752). The California Courts website provides additional details about small claims topics at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/1256.htm>.

If you prevail in a civil or arbitration case against a licensed contractor, send CSLB documentation that proves your case was construction-related and that you have an unsatisfied, final judgment against the contractor. If satisfactory proof is received, CSLB has authority to suspend the contractor's license if the judgment or award is final and not satisfied.

