

TRAVELING CONTRACTOR SCAMS

Tip Sheet

The Contractors State License Board, which operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates California's 315,000 contractors.

The CSLB investigates more than 20,000 complaints against licensed and unlicensed contractors every year. During fiscal year 2007-2008, the CSLB obtained more than \$35.2 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

*Visit CSLB online at:
www.cslb.ca.gov
or toll-free at:
(800) 321-CSLB (2752).*



There are groups of transient criminals that pose as door-to-door home repair contractors who rip off homeowners throughout California with painting, roofing, and paving scams. Not every door-to-door solicitor or family-owned business operates in this way; however, the Contractors State License Board urges consumers to be wary and to watch for any of these “red flags.”

THE SUSPECTS:

- Often related by family, and solicit door-to-door;
- Come across as friendly, but can use high-pressure or scare tactics;
- Are reluctant to give an up-front price or provide a written contract, and increase the price after the project is under way or completed;
- Demand payments in cash;
- Immediately cash checks (sometimes changing the amount before cashing);
- Drive customized newer vehicles with out-of-state license plates;
- Use toll-free (800) telephone numbers instead of local numbers;
- Have post office boxes or suite numbers instead of actual street addresses;
- Target the vulnerable, like elderly or recent immigrants; and
- Offer complimentary inspections and then offer to fix “problems.”

THE SCAMS:

- Claim they have left over material from another job at a cheap price;
- Claim they'll use a “sealant” but actually apply a useless, watery liquid that they spray on roofs, fences, or driveways;
- Push a few new wood shakes under old roofing shakes and apply a useless oil; or
- Charge by the can for painting and then exaggerate the amount they say was used.

TIPS TO AVOID BEING SCAMMED:

- Watch out for door-to-door solicitations—especially when they want to start work immediately;
- Be aware that your contractor must notify you of your right to cancel within three (3) days of signing a contract;
- Be a good neighbor and report any suspicious home improvement activity if your neighbor is elderly or otherwise vulnerable; and
- Get free information from the CSLB, like “10 Tips for Making Sure Your Contractor Measures Up.”

If you or a neighbor have hired or been solicited by someone fitting the description of these traveling criminals, please contact the Contractors State License Board in **Southern California at (562) 345-7600** or in **Northern California at (916) 255-2924**.