

Steps to File a Complaint

1. You can file a complaint online at **cslb.ca.gov**, by mail (after downloading and completing the complaint form), or by calling to request a form, **800-321-CSLB (2752)**.
2. Send CSLB copies (not the original documents) of all relevant printed documentation (no CDs or flash drives). All pertinent information should be included and mailed to the appropriate office below. For example, contracts (all pages, front and back), change orders, and cancelled checks (front and back). Photos can also be submitted. Failure to provide all documentation could result in a processing delay.
3. 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

UNLICENSED ACTIVITY

In California, it's illegal to contract for jobs that are \$1,000 or more (combined labor and material costs) without a state contractor license. If the work requires a permit or workers, a license is required no matter the project cost.

Homeowners may have little recourse if dissatisfied with a project undertaken by an unlicensed contractor. CSLB can issue an advisory notice, 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.

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

CSLB provides information about the status of a contractor license, bond, and workers' compensation insurance, as well as pending and prior legal actions. This information is available at **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)
cslb.ca.gov • CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

13P-036/0525

A CONSUMER GUIDE TO FILING

Construction Complaints



CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs



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. Whenever possible, CSLB aims to settle complaints with early intervention in the dispute and mediation.

CSLB'S JURISDICTION

Generally, 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 or omission.

The terms "contractor" or "builder" include individuals, associations, organizations, or companies that offer services to improve real property, related but not limited to, home building, improvement, maintenance, and repair.

HOW CSLB HANDLES COMPLAINTS

CSLB provides help to consumers through mediation, arbitration, referral to other government agencies, or by providing information about other avenues for individual redress, including small claims court. CSLB will take legal action against a contractor, when appropriate, for violations of applicable state laws and regulations.

CSLB reviews every written complaint to determine if it falls within its jurisdiction. Complaints involving a threat to public health and safety, and elder abuse cases receive 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 mails a written confirmation to the complainant. A notice also is sent to the contractor to encourage resolution without further CSLB intervention.

MEDIATION

If the disputing parties cannot resolve the complaint, CSLB may ask for additional information and/or documentation to determine if CSLB-led mediation is appropriate. Mediation is conducted over the phone.

If mediation is unsuccessful, other options include referral to a CSLB arbitration program, further CSLB investigation, or referral to alternative civil or dispute resolution methods.

Depending on the severity of the actions, the complaint may be closed with an advisory notice or letter of admonishment to the contractor, which remains a matter of record and could support further action against the contractor if future violations occur.

CSLB ARBITRATION PROGRAMS

CSLB administers two arbitration programs: a mandatory program for disputes involving alleged damages of \$25,000 or less, and a voluntary program for disputes involving allegations of damage between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

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

For more information about these programs, please see CSLB's mandatory arbitration program or voluntary arbitration program guides. Both are available on the CSLB website, cslb.ca.gov, or by calling 800-321-CSLB (2752).

INVESTIGATION

If CSLB determines that the complaint requires further investigation, the assigned investigator 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 \$30,000 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.)

If you prevail in a civil or arbitration case against a licensed contractor and that contractor fails to satisfy or pay the final judgment, CSLB has the authority, with sufficient proof, to suspend the contractor's license. In such instances, send CSLB documentation that proves your case was construction-related and that the final judgment is unsatisfied.

SMALL CLAIMS COURT

Involvement by CSLB does not guarantee restitution to complainants. If your primary interest is financial compensation, you should pursue the matter in small claims court (for individual damages of \$12,500 or less) or consult an attorney (for damages that exceed \$12,500). CSLB's small claims court guide is available at cslb.ca.gov or by calling 800-321-CSLB (2752); see also www.courts.ca.gov/1256.htm.

