



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.

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[CheckTheLicenseFirst.com](http://CheckTheLicenseFirst.com)

## ***AFTER A DISASTER, BEWARE!***

### **DEBRIS REMOVAL & CONSTRUCTION SCAMS**

#### **Door-to-Door**

After natural disasters, transient criminals routinely pose as door-to-door home repair contractors and scam homeowners.

Not every door-to-door solicitor or family-owned business operates in this way; however, 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 state-licensed.

The key is to avoid rushing into any agreement with contractors you don't know 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 being state-licensed in a trade, skill, or area of expertise.

**Remember: Construction work that costs \$500 or more in combined labor and material costs must be performed by a state-licensed contractor.**

- Minor alteration to a structure in a post-disaster area (taking out portions of damaged walls or flooring, etc.) requires a C-61/D-64 Limited Specialty/Non-Specialized state license.
- Structural alterations that are necessary after water, fire, wind or similar natural disasters require a "B" General Building state license.
- Demolition contractors must have a C-21 Building Moving/Demolition license or an "A" General Engineering license when parts of or an entire structure needs to be taken out and replaced.
- Specialty contractors licensed in any of the 42 different "C" Specialty classifications can subcontract with a "B" contractor, or perform construction work in their specialized building trade or craft.
- Water mitigation (clean-up and dry-out) with no structural alteration does not require a contractor license. (However, be sure your homeowner insurance policy covers individuals who may be injured on your property.)
- ✓ **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.**

#### **Consultants**

Be sure that anyone who claims to be a "consultant" for insurance, demolition, or construction has a clean business record and is state-licensed. If any

misunderstandings or disagreements occur with a contractor 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 state-licensed ([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.

### **Instant License Check**

Checking a contractor’s license is easy. Use CSLB’s website to verify that a contractor’s license is in “good standing” (current, active, and unrestricted) at: [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov). You can search by contractor number, business name, or employee name(s). Identical information is available by calling CSLB’s toll-free automated number: [800.321.CSLB \(2752\)](tel:800.321.CSLB).

### **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” on the CSLB website. 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 into a 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. 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 filling 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.