

News Release

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CSLB Media Contacts

Joyia Emard
Information Officer II
 916.880.0590
joyia.emard@cslb.ca.gov

Kevin Durawa
Information Officer
 916.255.4693
kevin.durawa@cslb.ca.gov

Unlicensed Contractors Arrested in Butte County Disaster Area Sting

*Contractors State License Board warns wildfire survivors about the dangers
 of hiring unlicensed contractors*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Wildfire survivors are warned to stay alert as they search for contractors to help them rebuild. A recent [Contractors State License Board](#) (CSLB) multi-agency sting operation in the city of Paradise in Butte County found unlicensed activity in the Camp Fire disaster area. Four unlicensed contractors were arrested on felony charges for contracting in a declared disaster area.



“Unlicensed and unscrupulous contractors try to take advantage of consumers rebuilding after a disaster,” said CSLB Registrar David Fogt. “Fire survivors need to check the license of any contractor they are considering before starting a rebuilding project.”

The January 19, 2022, undercover sting operation was conducted with representatives from the [Butte County District Attorney’s Office](#) and the [Paradise Police Department](#). CSLB’s Statewide Investigative Fraud Team members posed as homeowners and contacted suspected unlicensed contractors through their advertisements to perform earthwork, fencing, paving, and remodeling work.

The four people arrested for unlicensed contracting face felony charges because the unlicensed activity took place in a declared disaster area. Punishment may include a fine of up to \$10,000, and up to three years in state prison, or both.

One unlicensed contractor bid \$17,000 for fencing on the sting property, which is well over the legal limit for contracting without a license. In California, it's illegal for an unlicensed person to bid for or perform any home improvement valued at \$500 or more in combined labor and material costs.

Another unlicensed contractor was also charged with possession of methamphetamine and fentanyl. All suspects were ordered to appear in Butte County Superior Court.



CSLB-licensed contractors have met experience and testing requirements, carry a license bond, passed a criminal background check, and carry workers' compensation insurance for employees.

Tips for Hiring a Contractor

Hire only California-licensed contractors. Ask to see the license. The number must be on all advertisements, contracts and business cards.

[Check the license](#) number on CSLB's website or by phone at 800-321-CSLB (2752). Confirm the contractor has workers' compensation insurance for employees.

Create a personalized list of licensed, area contractors using the [Find My Licensed Contractor](#).

Get three bids, check references, and get a written contract.

Don't rush into decisions and don't hire the first contractor who comes along.

Don't pay more than 10 percent down or \$1,000—whichever is less.

Don't pay cash, and don't let the payments get ahead of the work. Only pay for work as it is completed to your satisfaction

Keep a job file of all project papers, including correspondence and copies of all payments.

Avoid making the final payment until you're satisfied with the job.

For more information, visit CSLB's [website](#), or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

Remodeling Licensing Options for Contractors

CSLB developed a B-2 Residential Remodeling Classification last year. It is available to qualified individuals working on home improvement work, including bathroom and kitchen remodels, replacement of cabinets, flooring, plumbing and electrical fixtures and other home improvement projects. However, the work can't involve structural alterations on loadbearing walls. Learn more about the B-2 license [here](#).

High resolution versions of the photos included in this release are available upon request.

Video Footage: No video of these sweeps is available, however the video clips below are from a January 2020 sting operation in Paradise, California.

One-minute clip here: <https://youtu.be/8Mp1UICfgRE>

Longer version: <https://youtu.be/6JVKVxvHNR0>

About CSLB: *CSLB operates under the umbrella of the Department of Consumer Affairs and licenses and regulates nearly 285,000 contractors in California. In 2021, CSLB helped consumers recover more than \$44 million in ordered restitution.*

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