# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU HIRE A CONTRACTOR

#### DO'S & DON'TS FOR CALIFORNIA CONSUMERS

Don't get nailed by an unscrupulous or unlicensed contractor.

Before you hire a contractor or sign a contract for home repair, call the

Contractors State License Board at 1-800-321-CSLB (2752)

or visit their web site.

### **GENERAL ADVICE**

**Don't** be a victim.

**Do** be aware that consumers have been targeted by scam artists posing as contractors.

**Do** deal only with licensed contractors.

**Don't** hire the first contractor who comes along.

**Do** ask to see the contractor's "pocket license" or Home Improvement Sales Registration.

All contractors are issued pocket licenses that show the type of trade for which they are licensed and the expiration date of the license. Ask to see some additional form of identification so you know with whom you are dealing.

# The CSLB urges consumers to follow these tips when dealing with a building contractor:

- Hire only licensed contractors and ask to see the license.
- Don't rush into decisions and don't hire the first contractor who comes along.
- Verify the contractor's license by checking on-line at: www.cslb.ca.gov.
- ❖ 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.
- Get three bids, check references, and get a written contract.
- Contact the CSLB if you have a complaint against a contractor.
- **❖** By law, all contractors who perform work that totals \$500 or more (labor and materials) must be licensed by the CSLB.

# **CALL THE CONTRACTORS BOARD**

**Do** call the Contractors State License Board to verify the information provided by the bidding contractor at 1-800-321-CSLB (2752), or log onto the internet at: <a href="https://www.cslb.ca.gov">www.cslb.ca.gov</a>. Be prepared with the contractor's name, license number and business address.

**Do** get at least <u>three</u> bids and <u>ask</u> for references of work the contractor has completed in the local area.

**Do** request *What You Should Know Before You Hire A Contractor*, a publication to help you make informed decisions when dealing with contractors. Order by calling 1-800-321-CSLB (2752), or download an order form on the internet at: **www.cslb.ca.gov** 

#### **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Don't pay cash.

**Don't** let the payments get ahead of the work completed, and don't pay the full cost of the job up-front.

**Do** know how much to give as a deposit.

Under state law, when undertaking a home improvement or repair job, contractors cannot ask for a deposit of more than ten percent (10%) of the total cost of the job or \$1,000—whichever is less—unless the contractor provides a bond, approved bond equivalent, or approved joint control ensuring completion of your contract. Any such bond is in addition to the bond required of all contractors for licensure.

Do require a written contract and don't sign it until you fully understand the terms. Before you sign a contract; Before you pay for repairs; Call the Contractors State License Board toll-free: 1-800-321-CSLB or log onto the internet at: www.cslb.ca.gov

Upon request, the Contractors State License Board provides information about a contractor's license, bond status, and workers' compensation as well as pending or prior legal actions.

# **License Status**

If you want information about a contractor's license status, please call the Board's toll-free telephone number, 1-800-321-CSLB(2752), or log onto the internet at: <a href="https://www.cslb.ca.gov">www.cslb.ca.gov</a>

#### **LEGAL ACTION HISTORY**

If you want information about a contractor's license history and pending or prior legal actions, please call the appropriate region Office's Legal Action Disclosure phone number:

Northern Region 916-255-4041 Southern Region 562-466-6021

## **COMPLAINT FORMS**

If you have a complaint against a contractor, call the Board at 1-800-321-CSLB (2752) and ask for a copy of "A Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints" and the complaint form.

CSLB can tell if your contractor is licensed, in good standing, and in the proper classification to fit your needs.

You can do more to protect yourself **before** hiring a contractor than the Contractors State License Board can do to help **after** you've been harmed. Call or check the web site for valuable information on selecting a contractor.

The Contractors State License Board has offices throughout California. For the telephone number and address of the office nearest you, call the Board's toll-free automated information number:

1-800-321-CSLB or log onto the internet at: www.cslb.ca.gov

Or Write Contractors State License Board P.O. Box 26000 Sacramento, CA 95826