



NSCB News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 21, 2017

CONTACT: Jennifer Lewis
Public Information Officer
(702) 486-1111

Scott Smith
Public Information Specialist
(702) 486-1165

CONSUMER ALERT

REPEAT UNLICENSED OFFENDERS SCAMMING NORTHERN NEVADA HOMEOWNERS

RENO, Nev. – Two unlicensed contractors are preying on northern Nevada homeowners, after a number of complaints received by the Nevada State Contractors Board have alleged the men accept large down payments and perform little or no work that is often substandard. As development projects increase, the availability of licensed contractors for home remodel and repairs becomes more limited, creating an opportunity for unlicensed contractors to prey on homeowners, placing them at added risk and liability.

Richard Eaton, who also goes by the alias' Jim Eaton, Richard Errington, and James Errington, allegedly provides bids to install new fencing, claiming to be affiliated with a licensed entity that currently maintains an inactive status with the Contractors Board. His ploy is to negotiate a contract and produce drawings and a convincing supply list for a homeowner's project, demand 50 percent payment up-front for immediate installation, and then fails to return phone calls or make himself available to complete the project. Payments and supplies are never reimbursed or returned to the homeowner.

Luke Schopper, who also goes by the alias' Luke Hunter and Luke Shop, is a former license holder whose license was revoked in 2010 for multiple violations of construction law. Schopper continues to perform work as an unlicensed contractor with prior convictions, often claiming to be affiliated with a licensed entity to deceive homeowners. His victims allege he bids projects related to landscaping and paving, demands large cash payments, and then performs substandard work that is typically abandoned without completion once payments begin to exceed the work being performed or he obtains a new contract.

It is important for the public to understand the risks of hiring unlicensed contractors to perform work on their homes, as well as the limitations placed upon them with regard to the work that can be performed.

(more)

Nevada law renders contracts with unlicensed contractors null and void. Additionally, many home insurance policies will not offer assistance to repair poor workmanship if the work was performed by an unlicensed contractor. Unlicensed contractors are less likely to carry worker's compensation insurance, which makes the homeowner liable if the worker gets injured on the job. Furthermore, the Nevada State Contractors Board is unable to provide its full investigative and recourse services to homeowners damaged by unlicensed contractors, leaving civil action as the primary option for remedy.

State law further requires a license for any work valued over \$1,000 (including labor and materials), or work that requires a building permit. A license is also mandated if the work being performed is within the trade of plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning, or refrigeration, as these have significant impacts on the health and safety of the public.

Homeowners should be cautious of individuals performing door-to-door solicitations and advertising construction services on mediums like Craigslist or social media. Some of the common sales/contracting practices include:

- Lower costs than competitors – price that can't be beat.
- Deals to lower the cost if project is paid in cash.
- False claims of being licensed, having the work performed by a licensed contractor, or that they have applied for a license, which is currently pending approval.
- Showing photographs of work the individual claims to have performed to entice the homeowner into signing a contract.

To verify a contractor is properly licensed, homeowners are encouraged to verify a contractor's license number (ex: 0012345), which is different than a Nevada business license number, on the Board's website: www.nscb.nv.gov. Ensure the license is in "Active" standing. Additionally, based on recent scams, homeowners should also contact the company the individual works for to verify employment and ensure they are aware of the services being bid.

Homeowners should try to secure at least three bids from licensed contractors, and check references on past work performed. Ensure the contract includes a high level of detail and exact specifications of the work to be performed, including payment schedules. Hiring licensed contractors may afford owners of single-family residences eligibility for the Board's Residential Recovery Fund, which can award up to \$35,000 in financial recourse to damaged homeowners.

(more)

To report unlicensed construction activity, call the **NSCB Unlicensed Contractor Hotline: (702) 486-1160 or (775) 850-7838**. If available, include the unlicensed contractor's name, business address, project location, phone number, and vehicle make, model, color and license plate number. When contracting for home repair and maintenance projects, always verify the contractor's license number on NSCB's website at www.nscb.nv.gov.

#

Visit our website: www.nscb.nv.gov

Join our social media network to receive current industry updates:  